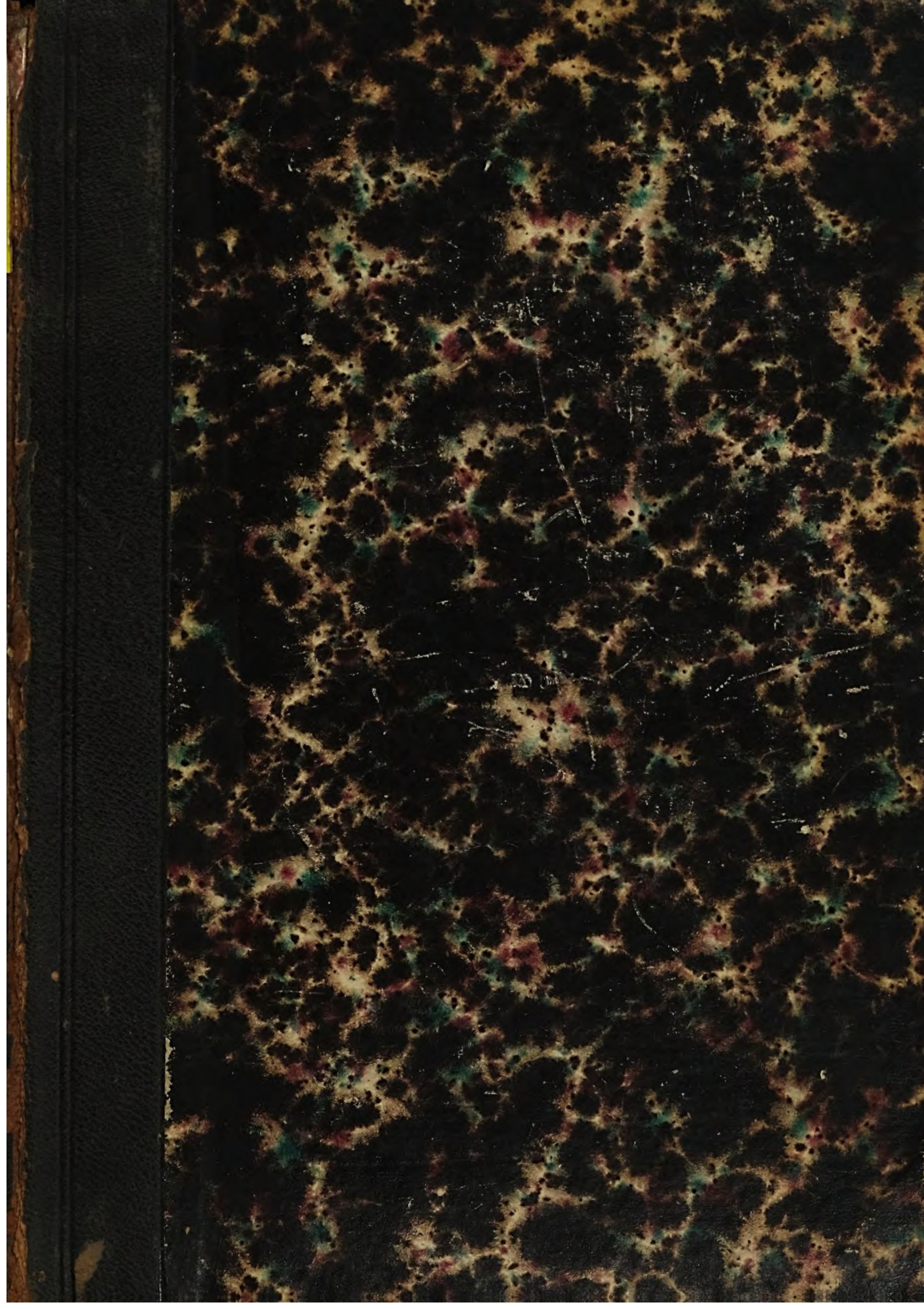




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Hawthorne

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COLLECTION
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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2158.

GERALDINE HAWTHORNE

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "MISS MOLLY."

IN ONE VOLUME.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: C. REINWALD, 15, RUE DES SAINTS PÈRES.

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COLLECTION
OF
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VOL. 2158.

GERALDINE HAWTHORNE.

IN ONE VOLUME.

“Life nor Death has torn
Our lives asunder, as for some, but drawn
Their separate strands together, in a knot
Closer than Life itself, stronger than Death,
Insoluble as Fate.”

GERALDINE HAWTHORNE.

A SKETCH.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "MISS MOLLY."

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1883.

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TO
GERALDINE MAY.

JULY 14TH, 1852.

TO

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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GERALDINE HAWTHORNE.

CHAPTER I.

SWEET AS SPRING-TIME FLOWERS.

“Lost somewhere, between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set in sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are lost for ever.”

APPLE-BLOSSOMS, apple-blossoms everywhere. Apple-blossoms crowning the gnarled trees overhead with thick white masses; apple-blossoms, in single petals, fluttering slowly, unsteadily earthwards, as if they regretted leaving visible to careless eyes the secret they had guarded so well and long; apple-blossoms carpeting the soft moss about the decaying trunks of the trees, and over them all alike, the living and the dead, the pink flush of sunset.

But silent as it was, this old orchard was not quite deserted: the soft spring airs rustling overhead, and the shafts of sunlight that found their way through the tender green of the young leaves, both spoke of the coming summer; but the embodiment of the season of promise sat under the shadow of a gnarled apple-tree, in the shape of a day-dreaming girl, with hands idly folded in her lap, looking straight

before her with grave unconscious eyes,—a girl whose thoughts were evidently far, far away from this New World orchard, and this early summer day, in the year of grace 1775.

Unconscious she remained for some time longer, enjoying the dim unreal beauties of that borderland that lies between the world of work and the world of sleep; but after a while she became aware of the slight breeze that had arisen,—a breeze that was whispering and sighing around her, rustling down showers of petals, and lifting the soft gold of her hair. And it was with something of wonder in her expression that, rising to her feet, she shaded her eyes with her hand from the now level beams of the western sun. Then, seeing how nearly he had sunk, with a sigh she turned away from the brilliant glory of his setting, and slowly began moving through the orchard.

The breeze had died away again, the sun had sunk lower still, ere she stood by the gate that looked out into the narrow lane which served as boundary between the orchard where she had been dreaming, and the home where she lived her life. For a moment, after crossing the narrow dividing road, and before opening the gate into the garden, she paused, her arms crossed upon it.

It was a pretty sight on which she looked. A long low house on the top of a gentle slope, with Virginia creeper growing over its walls and peeping in at every ugly square little window, and a garden sloping downwards from it to the lane that lay between it and the orchard,—a garden in which, when the seasons came round, hollyhocks reared their

proud heads, while sweet lavender-spikes blossomed greyly at their feet,—a garden in which roses of every sort and kind flourished, and filled the air with their fragrance,—party-coloured York and Lancaster, good old-fashioned cabbage roses, and, in one sheltered corner, a rose that was the joy of its owner, for it had been brought from so far beyond seas, and now lived, a nameless stranger, in a foreign land; for though its delicate beauty had survived the voyage, its name, if it had ever been known, had long ago been forgotten. But despite the loneliness, it had grown and flourished in its new home, and its delicate white blossoms flowered and withered year after year in this corner of America, apparently as contentedly as they had done in the land of its birth. And it possessed a name now—a name that had been given to it in the land of its adoption, and which was owned also long years ago by another delicate flower that had not so long outlived its transplantation—the name of “Geraldine Hawthorne.”

Very slowly up the narrow paths of the garden sauntered the slow figure of the girl,—past the sheltered wall where the peaches ripened in the hot autumn days, and which was now powdered with blossom,—past the strawberry-beds, with their prim borders of London pride,—past the sweet herbs, the snapdragons, and columbines,—and at length she found herself standing by the Virginia creeper, and the foreign rose-tree in its sheltered corner, close by the old house; and in passing by, she paused a moment to note with pleasure that the tiny green shoots were giving promise of renewed life, as they had done every spring-time for the last six-and-thirty years.

For six-and-thirty years had gone by since a stranger had stopped Mr. Hawthorne once in the streets of New York, and had prayed him, in faltering uncertain English, to help him, for he was in great need. And Mr. Hawthorne, who was a kindly-natured youth, had listened to his prayer, and had done what he could for him, and eventually had procured work for him, and thus won, perhaps at small cost to himself, the stranger's lifelong gratitude. For to Mr. Hawthorne, the betrothed husband of one of the greatest heiresses and beauties of her time, it had not proved difficult to secure what he wished for this foreigner, to whom he had taken a fancy; and perhaps the gratitude he received was greater than there was any need for. But however that might be, Mr. Hawthorne had made for himself a friend for life; and when he departed to his far-off home,—taking with him as his wife the girl who had preferred the handsome student, with his elegant tastes in poetry and letters, who was one day to astonish the world with his talents, to so many greater and apparently wiser men,—Jacques Minard, searching amongst his possessions for something worthy of offering to Mr. Hawthorne, and his lovely dark-eyed bride, chose his one valuable—at least it was so in his eyes—his white rose, that he had brought away from sunny France, as a memento of his birthplace and of a wife buried there, and presented it to his benefactor. And Mr. Hawthorne, who was a lover of flowers, and learned about them too, in his slight superficial way was very grateful for the rose; and as Jacques had never heard its name, or if he had, had long ago forgotten it, Mr. Hawthorne christened it afresh, giving it the same name as that of another

flower that he was intent upon transplanting safely to his far-off home—the name of “Geraldine Hawthorne.”

But the girlish figure, whose steps we have tracked across the intervening space that lies between the orchard and the low-roofed house, did not loiter long by the foreign rose-tree, but entering the house, a few steps brought her to the low-ceiled kitchen, with its flitches of bacon and bunches of sweet herbs, and there a quick impatient voice at once greeted her.

“Where have you been?” and a woman looked up from a table by the window, where in the fast departing daylight, she was busy ironing a combination of delicate lace and fine muslin. For in those days it was not considered beneath the dignity of even such a fine lady as Mr. Hawthorne’s wife to attend to many household matters, amongst which ranked firstly the “getting up” of her best laces.

“What have you been doing?” she went on, a tone of even greater irritation in her voice. “Did you not know that this was the day on which we had decided to iron and mend the laces? yet notwithstanding, you go out for the whole afternoon, leaving me to do all the work alone.”

“Oh, mother,” cried the girl penitently, “indeed I am sorry! I never thought——”

“No; that is always the excuse, and that is exactly what I complain of.” Mrs. Hawthorne’s voice became more angry still. This was perhaps in part to be accounted for by the fact that her head and back were alike aching with long stooping over her task. “You never *do* think. So you go forth and amuse yourself, leaving no one here but Pen, and you ought to know how much use she is.”

A pause, during which Madam ironed vigorously, and her daughter cast pleading glances towards her. But of a sudden she lifted her head again.

"I suppose there is small use asking what you have been doing. 'Tis easy to guess. The answer would be 'Nothing.' Where have you been?"

"In the orchard."

"The whole time?"

"Yes—— But oh, mother, I pray of you, do not be angry. The time slipped away so speedily that I remembered nothing till I saw that the sun was setting."

"And I feel assured you had no needlework with you," her mother continued, disregarding her daughter's words. "No, of course not," as the girl faintly shook her head. "I wonder you are not ashamed to sit idling for a whole long afternoon, and the frills of your muslin gown all needing to be hemmed, and your stocking just where it was a week ago. Alack that I should have been the mother of such a child!"

"I am so grieved, mother," repeated the girl. "I pray of you to forgive me, and let me finish those laces for you——"

But Mrs. Hawthorne interrupted her. "'Tis no good whatever striving to undo ill that's done. It grows too dark for ironing, and in addition to leaving your own work for others to do, your father has been asking for you constantly to help him with something."

And even while she spoke a faint querulous voice sounded in the distance, calling "Geraldine! Geraldine!"

"What shall I do?" questioned the girl uneasily, looking from her flushed wearied mother, towards the spot whence proceeded the voice.

“Oh, go to him decidedly. I do not wish to keep you. But I must say that I think it is very hard to have a daughter who is young and strong and healthy, and who is yet entirely and absolutely useless!” And with this parting shot Madam resumed her ironing, leaving the girl at liberty to depart, which she did forthwith, in perfect silence.

Her mother glanced after her as she turned away, and notwithstanding her vexation there was honest appreciative admiration in her glance. But her pride did not find expression in words, for “Geraldine,” she muttered, “such a name to give her! It is the name, I reckon, that has had something to do with making her such a dreamer. If he had but called her Deborah, after me, as I wished, the chances are that she would have been as hard-working and practical as I am myself.”

In the meantime Mistress Hawthorne was pursuing her way down the passage that led to the room from whence had issued the voice, her head bent, and in as generally penitent a state as it was possible for any one to be.

A door at the end of the corridor stood open, and it was through this that she passed. And as she did so, “Geraldine,” cried the querulous voice again, and an old man who was stretched on a sofa drawn close up to the fire, notwithstanding the warmth and brightness of the day, looked round expectantly.

“Yes, father, I am here,” she replied, in a low soothing voice. “I am so grieved to have stayed out all the afternoon; I fear you must have found it very lonely.”

"Yes, lonely enough. But that is always the way. And what else can one expect? The young forget the old, that is the privilege of youth. But it is very hard," he went on, fretfully, "when I cannot even write," glancing at his white delicate hands. "And I have had some beautiful thoughts whilst I have been lying here, which, I feel assured, could they only have been transmitted to paper, would have made me famous."

"But you cannot already have forgotten them, father? See, I will get a pen this very minute, and a sheet of paper, and I will write them out for you."

"No; I have not forgotten them. Those who have worked as I have done, for a lifetime, do not forget, though, after all, what avails it? 'Tis, perchance, but a waste of time," throwing himself back on his cushions despairingly.

"Yes, dear father, of course it is of use. What should we have done if the poets of old had shrunk away from a little trouble. We have no right not to make the most of our talents." She spoke gently, soothingly, more perhaps as a mother might speak to a sick complaining child than as a daughter to a father; but her calm voice, instead of serving to irritate the old man still further, as in the case of quick impatient Mrs. Hawthorne, seemed rather to quiet him; the frown disappeared, and his voice was more hopeful when he spoke again.

"Listen then, Geraldine," he said, and in a vain self-satisfied voice he repeated aloud a few verses, of the stilted old-fashioned kind, that apparently found its admirers in bygone times.

It was a dull little poem, addressed by a pas-

sionate shepherd to an unloving shepherdess, containing a great many allusions to her charms, and the hopefulness of his love, under most hopeless circumstances.

What might have been only rather a ludicrous display of self-conceit, was softened into pitiful sadness by the helplessness of the poet, and the listening figure of the girl standing beside him, absorbing interest in her eyes.

"Well, Geraldine, what do you say to it?" the author queried, a little flush of conscious pride passing over his pale cheeks as he repeated the last line.

"Dear father, I should say it was very good. You must have nearly enough now to fill a volume."

"Yes, very nearly, I hope: reach down the case, Geraldine, and write it out for me, for it seems to me that, allowing much for an author's satisfaction in his work, it is superior to aught I have yet accomplished." Mistress Hawthorne did as he bade her. She walked over to an ancient oak press, and took down from it a portfolio filled with manuscripts, then placing it on the table, she drew pen and ink towards her. The last rays of the sun coming through the window centred all round her, leaving the rest of the room in shadow. And seeing her thus in the full glory of the sunlight, you can judge how nearly perfect her beauty is,—a beauty of too queenly, too stately a type, ever to have been described as pretty—a beauty, perhaps, scarcely likely even to gain her many admirers.

Many a girl in the village, who owned a pair of bright eyes, and had a smile for every one, would have gained a prize for looks where she would have failed. For men are not impartial judges: it is to

be feared they are easily bribed, easily won over to the other side, easily persuaded to give the casting vote in favour of the one they love best. Though even putting that on one side, it requires an educated eye to appreciate perfection of form. The beauty of colouring appeals far more surely to the popular taste.

Geraldine Hawthorne's profile as she bends over her writing, is almost as faultless as that of a Greek statue; it is redeemed from the severity that characterises of necessity a statue, by the soft tints of life—the delicate white and pink of her complexion—the bright hair which waves over her low forehead, giving her a look of Clytie; and there is something also about the beautiful mouth which recalls that incomparable statue. The expression of her face is sad,—there is something almost pathetic in the soft grey eyes.

There is, of a surety, some truth in the old saying that coming events cast a shadow before them. The event may be very far off, and the shadow very faint and indistinct, but by those who live within it, its presence is ever felt.

Some such woman as this was Geraldine Hawthorne at nineteen.

"Now Geraldine, that it is finished, it were as well for you to go, for Madam is calling, and she dislikes to be kept waiting. I will ponder over the last verses whilst you are absent, and you will return, will you not, and set them down for me?"

"Of a certainty, father. And now I will go and help mother, for she has been alone all the afternoon."

"Where is Pen?" questioned the old man impatiently, the calmer expression vanishing, his voice taking fretful tones. "It is hard that there should never be any one to assist me, who am too feeble to assist myself! But an invalid is always a burden to every one."

"Nay, father, not so. Am I not always glad to be of use? 'Tis an honour. Why, when the book is published, it will seem to me that I have also a share in it."

"Yes, yes," and the frown once more died away; for the gentle manners and soft voice which did but serve to add fuel to the flame of Madam's ire, had always a contrary effect upon her husband. "Yes, yes, we must bear the end ever in view. The time will come—rest assured it will. Sometimes I can nigh hear the voices that tell of victory."

Whilst he was speaking, Mistress Hawthorne had been putting together the loose sheets of manuscript, and as she placed them in the portfolio, for a moment a little sorrowful smile played about her mouth,—a smile more nearly akin to tears than laughter.

Perhaps, glancing from the contents of the case to the frail invalid propped up on the couch, the pitiful smile is not difficult to interpret.

Pages and pages of manuscript lie before her: here, three or four verses of a sonnet; there, a dozen lines of an essay; further on, the commencement of a great epic poem; and so on, through dozens of sheets of paper.

Everything attempted, and attempted, perhaps, not altogether unsuccessfully, if one may judge from the commencements,—and nothing finished. Not one

poem, however short, does Geraldine find with "Finis" written across it.

Was it any wonder she should sigh as she turned over the sheets whereon the capabilities of talent were visible? If not talent of the first order, yet of sufficient nearness to it to have gained for its possessor a little niche from whence he might have sung to a listening world. And instead, here he lay, with but so few steps between him and the end, and that which had been given him to do, all left undone.

CHAPTER II.

YES OR NO?

"And what am I to you? A steady hand
To hold, a steadfast heart to trust withal;
Merely a man that loves you, and will stand
By you, whate'er befall."

"GERALDINE," cried a quick voice, as closing the library-door behind her, Mistress Hawthorne stood once more in the passage.

At the sound of her name, Geraldine looked round, and then stood still on perceiving the figure that was stepping lightly and swiftly down the shallow oak staircase to meet her. A girl's figure, small and slight, with black hair brushed back under a lace cap, dark and flashing eyes, that looked everything by turns and nothing long.

"Ah, Geraldine, where have you been all this afternoon? Did you not promise—— And you knew that if you went out, I could not; and you know how

I dislike lace-washing, and how ill I do it, and how Madam scolds. Ah, you are cruel, cruel!" she concluded angrily, stamping her little high-heeled shoe as she spoke. "You promised, and then——"

"But, dear Pen," said Geraldine, gently, "I cannot even now remember what I was to do. I have indeed forgotten."

"Yes, you always forget," said the other tearfully, "but it is in good truth hard on me. Do you not mind that this was the afternoon I was to go for a walk with Josiah Sumner? and of necessity, as you were not here, Madam was cross and scolded, so that I could not get away, and he will have been awaiting me all these long hours down by the river." And here tears came into Pen's bright eyes.

"Do not be angry, Pen; I know I am oftentimes thoughtless and careless, and it was not kind of me to forget you this afternoon, but indeed I will try and mend my ways. And in the meantime let us consider what is to be done now."

"Oh, there is nought to be done now; it is too late. He will have gone home again."

"But another day, Pen, or perhaps if I were to ask mother, she would let him come to tea one night. Do not cry," she went on tenderly, putting her arm round Pen's neck; "do you really care so much about him?"

No answer. Pen was weeping.

"Pen," asked Geraldine at length, and perhaps in her tone a little wonder might have been discerned, "are you going to marry Josiah Sumner?"

"Oh, I do not know, Geraldine; you always look such a great way ahead. I have never even thought of that."

"But do you mean nothing more than just to go on talking and laughing with him? Don't you think that is a pity, Pen? Who knows but he may truly love you, and then it is scarce a fair game, is it?"

"I do not know," said the other petulantly; "you are so unlike other girls, Di, that you cannot comprehend their little amusements. Ah, it will cost you much some day! You will go on seeking, seeking ever for some hero like the men you read of, and who I daresay were not a bit different to every one else, or to the people with whom they lived, until you have wasted all your life."

"But, Pen, dear, do you then think that there are not *any* men in the world like the ones we read of—none greater than those about us?"

"No, I do not; but then if I ever met one, I am not sure that I should like him. I like a man who is willing to admire me, and care for me, and——"

"I fear me, we do not agree then; for I should like to meet some one very great, and I should be content to love him, even if my love were unreturned. Surely it is better to look up than to look down."

"Oh, dear Di, what folly you do talk! Some day you will pay dearly for your dreams. Look up and look down! When once you begin to talk in that fashion, it is time to think of something else. But my opinion remains unchanged; for everyday life, I prefer the man who admires my eyes, and tells me so, to him who needs to be worshipped and looked up to, and quite forgets to observe whether I have any eyes at all."

Geraldine smiled, but sighed too. "There, you have forgiven me, Pen, I am sure. What a good

thing it is you can never be cross for more than five minutes together, for of a surety I must be a trial to your temper!"

"Yes, dear Di, if you were ever to marry this hero of whom you dream, what a household you would have! He would be too great to attend to it, and you would be so occupied with worshipping him, that you would not be able to spare the time."

Perhaps, after all, Pen was not so far wrong.

It is unsatisfactory, on opening a book, to find the heroes and heroines arranged in a row, and labelled "good" or "bad," as the case may be. It is pleasanter to creep, as it were, into their characters, even as we do in life. For in life is there anything more annoying than to be commanded to love such a one because he is worthy of respect, to dislike such a one because he has proved himself unworthy? Do we not like to choose for ourselves, even though our choice may not prove correct? And yet many of us are withheld by that labelling process of which people are so fond; for there are not many who care to acknowledge friendship with one whom the world has pronounced unworthy—it seems to reflect upon our own powers of discernment.

And as it is in real life, so it is in a novel. The men and women with whom we are brought in contact may have proved themselves objects of dislike to those amongst whom they dwelt, and yet by their very sins may appeal to our sympathies, may recall to us trials and temptations which assailed us at some bygone period—little weaknesses, never even guessed at by those around us, but which were there nevertheless, and serve to give us a fellow-feeling with a character

that another stronger man might never know, but which we should be ashamed, perhaps, to acknowledge, if we knew from the beginning that he, with whom we feel in accord, is already marked out as a predestined villain. For few men are born villains. They take the wrong turning at the decisive moment of life, and so by degrees end by finding themselves at the bottom of the hill, instead of the top. Perhaps the strength, rightly used, that goes to constitute a villain, might have made a hero. Which all is by way of preface to saying that I do not intend to marshal all my *dramatis personæ* on the stage before you, when I say some explanations are necessary. Preliminaries are always dull, whether in a novel or on the stage, or even in life.

It is only when we have seen those we love best swallowed up in the storm, and many of our own treasures disappear in the whirlpool, and nigh shipwrecked ourselves, are gazing eagerly out for the haven,—it is only then that we learn to look back with regret to the harbour we left in the morning without one backward wish or sigh. To the young the rest and peace of old age are far more terrible to look forward to, than the burden and heat of the day.

The Geraldine Hawthorne you have seen was not the daughter of the delicate girl who left her far-off home to endow, with her great fortune and her greater love, the young hopeful student, who, with all the world before him, was going to earn for himself a great name that was to be writ upon the walls of time. No; after one short year *she* had died, leaving a little week-old daughter, and a miserable heart-

broken husband to mourn her loss; and it had taken half a lifetime for him so far to forget the past as to put in her place the kind-hearted, quick-tempered Madam, who now ruled supreme in Endicot Farm.

But when he found himself once again a father, he had chosen for the child of his old age the name that had been that of the bride of his youth; and Madam, who admired and was proud of her husband if she did scold him, and who was not prone to any jealous or foolish sentimentality over the long dead and buried past, consented to his wish. Indeed, when her mind was not occupied with the baking or churning, or the other thousand and one cares of a busy housewife, she would grow pitiful over that other woman, who had come down, thinking to live out such a happy life with the man who was all in all to her, and who had known but such a short time of that love she had wished for, and had then passed away beyond its reach for ever;—a vague, unnecessary pity, a wasting of time, for which she would have blamed any one else for indulging in. But if such were needed, there was another ever-present reminder of the dead bride,—a sad reminder, which spoke out of the dark eyes of the girl that lived in the old farmhouse, and was as a sister to Geraldine. A younger sister, apparently, though in reality but a few months lay between them; but so young in her petulance and wilfulness, that sometimes Mistress Hawthorne felt that, despite the similarity in age, she indeed stood in the position of aunt to this wilful, changeable girl.

As, indeed, was the case; for the first Geraldine had left a little daughter when she died, and for sixteen years this relic from his buried past had been

the life of the farm and the joy of her father's heart. But at length came a sad day,—a day when the home that had sheltered her so many years woke up to find she had fled. Nothing more was heard of her, until one snowy night on the threshold of the door was found a little crying, black-eyed baby, on whose gown was pinned a paper with the one sad word "Penitence" written thereon. And not long after came the news of a drowned woman, found in a neighbouring pool; and Mr. Hawthorne had no need to go and look at the straight sad figure, to know that it was that of his lost daughter.

He never mentioned his trouble, only sank month by month into the fretful scholar that you see to-day. Perhaps, who knows, conscience may have reproved him for sixteen neglected years of the dead girl's life, which had ended in that watery grave. But if this were the case, he did not speak of it. He gave no orders about the little foundling, except to say once it was to be called by the name pinned on its frock; but neither did he seem to expect it should look elsewhere for a home. But when it was about eight months old, he asked Mistress Deborah if she would become his wife, and do a mother's part by the motherless babe; and she saying "Yes," and a new element being thus introduced into the homestead, Mr. Hawthorne seemed to think he had done his duty, and sank back into the studies and writing which were his only real delight, leaving to active quick-tempered Madam the charge of his household. Soon after, the illness had come which had crippled him, and the retirement which used to be choice became enforced.

So much for Pen's history, but no shadow of her nameless estate and forlorn infancy hung over her, as—tea over, Madam safe in the kitchen scolding the help somewhat loudly by way of relief to her aching back, and Geraldine hard at work ironing to make up for wasted hours—she stole down through the little garden towards the orchard. Once in there she breathed more freely, and sped along as quickly as she could; for it was just possible that Josiah Sumner, who was of a sentimental turn of mind, might have wandered back here again for a final peep at the habitation of Mistress Pen, before setting out on his homeward ride.

In a few minutes Pen's mind was presumably set at rest; for leaning against a large apple-tree, his eyes fixed on Mr. Hawthorne's house, stood a strong burly figure, distinctly outlined against the fast-gathering dusk. The colour burnt up into Pen's cheeks, and her eyes sparkled as she drew nearer, until it was small wonder that in Josiah's eyes she seemed beautiful.

He was one of the many to whom Geraldine's perfect form and delicate colouring would never have appealed, but who felt his heart-beats quicken at the sight of these black eyes, one moment dimmed with tears, the next sparkling with laughter,—at the approach of this girl, who seemed such a child when compared with tall, calm Mistress Hawthorne. He moved quickly forward with an exclamation of joy, and held out his arms almost as if he would have embraced her, but that she shrank away.

"It is not 'Yes,' then?" he asked sadly, his somewhat rough features taking a look of disappointment.

"Ah, Pen, you do not know how I have hoped against hope all this afternoon! and then, after fearing by your not being here that you had decided it must be 'No,' when I saw you coming I was so hopeful," he ended, slowly, "that it was to be 'Yes' after all."

"I could not come," she said. "In truth, I tried; but Geraldine was out, and Madam was cross, and—oh, Josiah," with a little sob, "pray don't make me say 'Yes' or 'No' yet."

"But," he began.

"No, no," slipping her hand under his arm, and lifting her face coaxingly, "you must not speak like that, for that means you are angered."

"Not angry, only sorry," he interpolated.

"Ah, but you must not be either one or the other yet. You must wait. You see I am so young."

"Yes, so you are, Pen; but that is what I like."

"But when one is so young, Mr. Sumner——"

"Say Josiah."

"Well, Josiah—one does not know one's own mind—at least I don't; and suppose we were engaged, or married, and I was to grow tired of you, or you of me?"

"Impossible!"

"Yes, perchance for *you*," with a little smile, "but then I might;" and, with wide-open eyes, "what *should* I do then?"

"Ah, then you'd have to bear it."

"But I couldn't; I never could bear aught. So I think my plan is best: just let us wait a little." And as Josiah did not answer for a minute—"I would see you sometimes," she said, "and talk to you, you know."

"Not like this," and he sighed.

"Why not?"

"It must not be," and Josiah reddened a little through his sunburn. "No, Pen, if we are not promised to one another, you mustn't do aught that might let the neighbours talk."

Pen coloured too, though she scarcely knew why. No thought of evil had entered into her head about talking to Josiah Sumner. Besides, if folk did say she was engaged to him, where would be the harm? The very thought almost made her wish she had said "Yes," as she looked up at the earnest face of the man by her side, though, after all, it was better as it was. In a little while she would see, but in the meantime it was pleasanter to remain free.

"So good-night," she said; "I think it is time for me to be going home," demurely, "for fear of the neighbours, you know!"

She did not much heed the pained expression in Josiah's honest face at her flippant words.

"Yes, Pen, you are right," he said, gravely; "but," catching hold of her hands, "before you go, will you promise to meet me here this day fortnight, and till then think it over again, and if you can say 'Yes,' Pen, do? If not," he went on in a lower voice, "I shall give you a year more, and then come back again. But, Pen, dear," his steady voice trembling a little, "strive very hard to let the answer be 'Yes,' for I want you so much!"

He did not say another word, just lifted her little hand in his great one, and after holding it thus for a second in a firm clasp, dropped it and turned away, and soon under the shadowy trees he was lost to sight.

The tears trembled on Pen's eyelashes as she turned homewards, so easily did they rise—almost as easily as the heedless rippling laughter which would follow them a moment later; but nevertheless, though she was not feeling quite her usual light-hearted self, yet she was certain she had done right. "For of a surety I do not know," was her thought, as she crossed the garden and slipped in by the open kitchen-door—"of a surety I do not know whether I love him or not."

CHAPTER III.

COMING EVENTS.

"For Knowledge is a steep which few may climb,
While Duty is a path which all may tread."

IN these far-off days of which I am writing, early rising was the rule; nevertheless, though no one lingered long in bed, yet Madam Hawthorne shone pre-eminently as the early riser of Endicot Farm. Therefore it fell to her lot the next morning to be the one to meet the girls with glowing cheeks and reproofs for tardiness, which had prevented them hearing what doubtless they would consider an important piece of news. "There is a report," she said, "brought here by Job the pedlar, that Captain Calverley is on his way hither; and if so——" Madam here paused in her story to arrange on a tray the breakfast for the invalid, who never appeared till later on in the day,—and in pouring out of tea and arranging the honey in the most tempting manner, she quite lost the thread of her story.

"Oh, go on!" cried Pen, the colour flying up into her cheeks, her eyes sparkling. "Oh, Madam, do not keep us waiting. See, even Di is interested. Do you really mean Captain *Ralph* Calverley, and that he is coming here? A real soldier! Oh, Di, think of it!"

"Ralph Calverley was the man who rode back to save a soldier, was it not?" asked Geraldine, leaning forward, and speaking a shade more quickly than was her wont.

"Oh, Madam," interposed Pen, "give Kezia the tray, and tell us all about it."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Madam sharply: "firstly, because, as you know full well, your grandfather does not like it; and secondly, because it is not Kezia's business."

"Give it to me, mother," said Geraldine, rising—only the last words having fallen on her ear, for Madam's news had sent her thoughts into Dream-land; but at the sharp words she rose at once and took the tray in her hands. "Sit down, mother," she said gently, "and begin your breakfast and your story. I shall not be long." And as she went down the long passage, the only thoughts that she allowed herself to indulge in were, "I was dreaming again, and leaving my work undone—just the very thing that I was so grieved about only yesterday." So she resolutely put out of her mind the little scrap of news that she longed to hear, and entered her father's room.

"Geraldine, is that you?" in the sharp, fretful tones she knew so well; "how late you are! Ah, do come in more hastily. Don't linger in the doorway—it makes a terrible draught. How careless chil-

dren are!" with a little shiver. "Now," as she placed the tray in front of him—"now, a sheet of paper quickly. I have thought of another verse for the poem you wrote down yesterday."

"Yes, father, I will seek one."

She stepped across to the oak press, and took down the portfolio. As she looked through it, searching for the verses she wanted, a door opened, and Madam's voice was borne to her ears. "And——" Then the door was closed, and all was still as before. Evidently all was peaceful once more in the parlour, and Madam was delighting in being the one to tell the story, and Pen was the happy listener. Mistress Hawthorne paused, poem in hand, and looked wistfully towards the door. Then the querulous voice called, and she remembered her late determination, and went back to his side.

"Here it is, father."

"You are so long," he began.

"Yes, I am slow," she replied, gently.

"Slow and sure, perchance," soothed by her gentleness. "Better than that dancing, good-for-nothing girl, Pen, who neither listens to what is said to her, nor does what she is bid."

"Pen is very young, father; young for her years, that is," Geraldine replied softly, as she bent her head over her task.

"Folly," muttered the old man crossly; "she is spoilt and petted; and one day you will all find out the mischief of always letting her have her own way." But then he had to begin dictating the new verse of his poem, and in this soothing piece of work, his irritation was shortly forgotten.

In the parlour things went more cheerfully. Pen and Madam Hawthorne, for once thoroughly in accord, talked much over the news; for, provided it did not interfere with any of her household duties, or mean gadding abroad in any form, for self or maids, Madam was not in the least averse to a bit of gossip herself. And when Geraldine opened the door half an hour later, she found them still talking; and it was only her entrance that put more important matters into Madam's head. But first she paused to answer Geraldine's question,—“Was it the same man that they had heard of—the man who, under fire, had gone back to help a wounded comrade?”

“Yes, Di,” replied Pen, before Madam had time to speak, “he is in truth your own pet hero.”

Something in the tone of Pen's speech, something in Geraldine's attitude, in the expression of her face, roused the motherly instinct of fear, albeit of she knew not what, in Madam Hawthorne's breast.

“Don't talk nonsense, Pen. A hero is a man that does his duty,” said Madam, with less sharpness than usual. “Don't run away with the idea that heroes are made different to other folk. Give Josiah Sumner the opportunity, and I venture he would leave undone as little as most men,” which was high praise coming from Madam's lips. Whereat Pen blushed,—but this, Geraldine, her thoughts being still far away on the heroic track, did not observe. Madam Hawthorne having given her warning on the spur of the moment, went away about her manifold cares and duties, and forgot it. But not so Geraldine. The few seemingly careless words clung to her memory, and ever and anon she felt herself wondering what went to compose

a hero. Was it possible that they were made of the same clay as other men? that Josiah Sumner, under that rough exterior, was one who, if occasion arose, would prove one of those who do the deed that goes down to the unborn ages?

Of course he would do his "duty," as Madam said; but yet, though she could not describe, nor even understand her own thoughts, that was scarcely Geraldine's idea of a hero.

Was it possible that Ralph Calverley was possessed of a rough, unlovely exterior, like Josiah Sumner? And though she did not like to acknowledge it, there was a little pang of disappointment when she owned that it was but too possible.

Later on, when the evening was drawing in, all the doubts of the morning were set at rest; for it was known through the length and breadth of Endicot, that Job the pedlar's rumour was not without foundation, but that Captain Ralph Calverley, with a companion-in-arms, was expected at Judge Sweetapple's, where he would remain a day or two recruiting for the militia regiments, now being raised in all parts of the country.

Pen, in the dusk of the evening, having been sent by Madam down into the village to a neighbour's to settle some question as to the buying and selling of chickens, and strolling back, meditating over Josiah and yesterday's interview, and consequently less actively alert than usual, became suddenly aware of a couple of horsemen riding close behind her. Starting somewhat to one side, the horse nearest her shied at her sudden movement, and caused its rider, who was deep in conversation with his companion, to look round,

startled at the sudden apparition of a slim bright-eyed girl standing in the deserted village street, reddening under his searching gaze,—for it was searching, owing partly to the half-darkness and the suddenness of her appearance. Then in an instant they had ridden on, and Philip Honeywood just remarked to his companion, “A pretty maiden.”

“Was she? I could not see her,” was the answer. And in the talk of the serious business with which both their minds were occupied, straightway forgot all about her.

Not so Pen. With flushing cheeks she hurried home to tell Geraldine the great good luck that had befallen her, inasmuch as to her it had happened, to be the very first to see this great hero.

“And he is handsome, Di, and young, and——”

“Go to bed, Pen,” said Madam, severely, “and talk no more nonsense.”

And Pen went, disobedience being an undreamt-of proceeding in the New England farmhouse,—went to bed at least, there to weave, who can tell what kinds of, bright improbable dreams!

And Geraldine followed her shortly. She was glad, though she scarcely knew why; but a weight of some kind was lifted. Everything would have seemed wrong and out of proportion somehow, if this hero, of whom she had often thought, should have turned out one of those poorly endowed by nature; and, from Pen’s whispered account as she said good-night, such was apparently not the case. It is always disappointing to find that the great soul we have secretly worshipped is enshrined in some poor, dwarfed, unhandsome body. We will desire it otherwise; we will so often too, to

our own undoing, trust the handsome face in preference to the plain one! So Geraldine was glad, in her calm gentle fashion, when she found herself alone in her ghostly moonlit chamber,—glad that there was no outward shock to be got over in the sight of the Ralph Calverley she had heard so much about; for he was not only her “pet hero,” as Pen had laughingly designated him, but a household word in many homes where the war was the great topic of conversation,—and Captain Calverley’s name was there spoken with fervent admiration, as one of the men likely to bring fame and honour to his country.

CHAPTER IV.

POUR Y PARVENIR.

“His was no common mould of mind,
But made for action, ill or good.
Cast in another land and scene,
His restless, reckless mind had been
A curse, or blessing, to his kind.”

FIVE-AND-THIRTY years before, in a village distant from Endicot about fifty miles, a woman rejoiced with exceeding joy that a man-child was born into the world,—rejoiced, though bitter grief was mingling with her joy, seeing that the grass was not yet green above the husband’s grave whose wife she had been but for one short year; and this little babe that she held close against her breast, and whose cries she so softly hushed, soothing her weeping for its sake, was all that she had left to her out of the wreck of past happiness. But still, perhaps because it was her all, she esteemed

it more highly, worshipped it more fondly, than if she had been the proud wife and mother of many sturdy urchins, with no occasion to feel lonely, if this precious link with the past were out of sight more than for a few brief minutes together.

Thus Ralph Calverley grew up under the gentle rule of his widowed mother. To her he was always affectionate, to the rest of the world a quiet handsome boy, with a will like iron,—so his master at the village school affirmed,—a will that must be flogged out of him: a domineering tyrant, the boys declared, who was only happy when ruling some one, let the some one be whom he might. A sullen ill-tempered boy, who understood alone the active conjugation of the word “to rule:” the passive form of the word had never come within his comprehension.

From school to the neighbouring town of Boston, where, as a clerk in a merchant’s office, he had had a chance perhaps; but, unfortunately for him, he was superior in many ways to his companions, so it was school over again. A strong will, all the makings of a fine character, but spoiling for want of finding its own level. And how was that possible amongst ill-educated young men, whom he inspired with awe, if not with admiration? He was never what is commonly termed popular,—he was too reserved for that; but he had always a little circle of believers, who prophesied that one day Ralph Calverley would do great things. And he believed in himself firmly, unwaveringly, as people cast in a stronger mould than their neighbours are wont to do. He was never to be turned from a purpose once decided on; and, greater gift still, he knew what it was he desired, and could wait, with

that patience which is strength in itself, working the while quietly and perseveringly towards a pre-determined end, until, by the force of will and the power of patience combined, weaker men fell away around him, and his hand was free to stretch forth and seize the prize.

Years passed thus. What little a poor unbefriended man can do to push himself on in an overcrowded business he did. Then the war with England broke out, and Ralph Calverley found his vocation. He was a born soldier. Organising forces, breathing courage into half-desponding men, training raw recruits, keeping together those who had been trained,—there he found the work for which he was pre-eminently fitted.

Recognised at once in the time of difficulty,—as all those who rise above the average soon are,—he turned his—what he now felt to have been rusting—talents to some purpose. With the same untiring energy that had marked him as boy and man, he now devoted himself to raising and training a regiment of mounted volunteers; and “Calverley’s Horse” had already seen a fair amount of service. So now the devouring passion which had fretted and chafed him all these years of toiling, unrecognised as one among the many, seemed in a fair way to raise him to the ranks of the great—of those whose lives mark the world in letters of gold; for ambition is but the striving after higher, better things. It is only when we measure ourselves with our fellow-men, and crave the applause of the world before the “well done” of an approving conscience, that it becomes a curse. Satan, we read in “Paradise Lost,” felt that he would rather

reign in hell than serve in heaven; and there are men cast in the same mould—men who cannot comprehend the dignity of service—men, perchance, who are well content with heaven till the possibility arises of greater power elsewhere; and with these the boundary-line is easily overstepped, if, with the same strength with which they once combated for good, evil having now become their master, they use their weapons on his behalf.

But Ralph Calverley, when he found himself as a king amongst his soldiers, with brains and the opportunity and power to use them, and all the sordid cares of poverty which had hindered and narrowed in his young life faint shadows of the past, fancied he had reached the summit of his ambition. Unfortunately, however, ambition is a growing passion, that constantly requires something fresh whereon to feed; but then we are not quick to discover the disagreeable side of our pet failing. And in those early days there was no fault to be found with Ralph Calverley—his very failings were virtues in the eyes of his followers. And to do him justice, he deserved a great deal of the admiration he won; for though, perhaps, had it been to his own advantage, he would not have hesitated to sacrifice those whose very pride he was, yet the occasion had not arisen, and it is difficult to believe in ourselves succumbing to a temptation that has not yet assailed us. In imaginary encounters we always come off conquerors. There was only one sorrow to shadow his life, and that was, that the little mother whom he had loved with the only strong affection his life had ever known, had died before he had stepped from obscurity to fame, and with her death

had passed away the one softening influence of his life.

She was the only woman to whom he had ever given more than a passing thought. Women were in his eyes toys, trifles—creatures outside the real business of life—well enough if the man had reached a position in which he was at liberty to indulge in the luxury of fancies; but the woman—the ideal wife—a helpmeet for the man—a partner of life's joys and sorrows,—such a being he had never for a moment contemplated. Yet, with the curious inconsistency of man, he set his mother apart from the rest of her sex, seeing in her the type of all that was true and lovable, but failing to argue therefrom that another woman might arise like unto her,—rather shutting her out from the rest of the world, than enlarging the world so as to enclose her.

Such was Ralph Calverley at five-and-thirty. A hero—at least in the eyes of many of those with whom his name had grown familiar as household words; and amongst his many worshippers, there was not one who had followed his career more intently, or applauded more the actions which had won him name and fame, than Geraldine Hawthorne—Geraldine Hawthorne, who, reading or hearing of that which he had accomplished, of the indomitable will that had waited for the suitable career, and, having found it, had made of it a road to fame, had long worshipped from afar.

Such was the man with whose deeds Massachusetts was now ringing; and it was he whom Pen had encountered on her homeward way, he of whom Geraldine Hawthorne was dreaming in the moonlight at Endicot Farm.

It was not surprising he should be much thought of, for the things he had accomplished were those of which, in time of war, is formed the victor's laurel wreath; in such times it is the man of strong decided will, the man whose deeds are as the emphasis of his words, that is the idol of the crowd. And Captain Calverley never hesitated, or if he did, the doubts were hidden away out of sight in his own breast, and his soldiers only saw the ultimate success, without learning any of the previous struggles. And that power of working out a problem, alone, unaided, and letting the world know only the result, without acquainting it with the means whereby the result is arrived at, is in itself an empire over others. And in addition to what, in the eyes of the inhabitants of Endicot at least, seemed "world-wide" fame, Captain Calverley had in this small unfrequented village, a local habitation and a name; for Judge Sweetapple's wife, up at the House, was his kinswoman, some distant connection of his dead mother's, so that it was small wonder that there was much excitement in all the farmhouses around, when it was known that this renowned warrior was about to honour Endicot with his presence: and many were the maiden hearts besides those of Pen and Geraldine Hawthorne that beat a little quicker than usual at the thought of the illustrious countryman who had appeared in their midst.

After passing Pen, Mr. Honeywood and his companion rode on more quickly. The little encounter seemed to have reminded them that it was growing late and dark, and that the sooner they were at their journey's end the better. Turning out of the narrow

village street, when they had arrived at the bend in the road which led to Endicot Farm, they turned towards the right, and soon found themselves in a narrow lane, and after following its windings for about half an hour they entered a grass-grown avenue, which terminated in a low house, that shone white through the fast-gathering gloom. By daylight there was something quaint and pleasant about the place, with its air of old-fashioned serenity; but at this time of night, growing chilly as it was too, it was not a favourable moment for remarking its beauty.

"I have not been here since I was ten years old," Captain Calverley remarked; "but I remember it all so clearly that it might have been yesterday." And having so spoken, he went back in memory to that former visit, seeming to see, as in a vision, the little dark-haired serious boy, his hand clasped in his mother's, walking up the avenue from the village inn, where they had arrived, cramped and tired, after the long journey from Boston; seemed to see him growing a little nervous under the combined influences of this new event in his life, succeeding that long fatiguing journey, and clutching more tightly yet the hand of the slender fragile woman in the prim white cap and sober grey dress, who walked by his side. Ah! those days were over.

With a quick impatient sigh he recalled his straying thoughts to that head centre, self, from which they were rarely long absent. He had dreamed dreams in those far distant days, as he had roamed, a silent thoughtful child, about Cousin Jonathan's fields, or sat quietly by cousin Miriam's side, and the dreams seemed in a fair way of being realised now. The day would

come, must surely come, when the name of Ralph Calverley would be trumpeted far and wide—when there would be no one to clash with him. He must reign—but he must reign alone. And thus thinking, the two men rode up together to Endicot House. The clatter of their horses' feet had apparently been heard, for almost immediately the door was opened by a staid, middle-aged woman, who, leaning forth in the twilight, candle in hand, demanded if they were Captain Calverley and Mr. Honeywood? On hearing their reply in the affirmative, she called sharply once or twice, "Saul! Saul!" and a man appeared out of the darkness, and took the reins from their hands.

Geraldine Hawthorne always said that it was like going to sleep, and waking up to find one's self a child again, with no cares or responsibilities, to enter the doors of Endicot House. And something of the charm made itself felt even by Ralph Calverley. There came a soothing sensation as if he had passed through the portals into an earlier, fresher world, far removed from all the jarring fret and worry of the one where he passed his life. The long low room, with its old world fragrance of lavender and *pot-pourri*—the evidence of the maxim "of a place for everything, and everything in its place," being carried out in each smallest detail; and as an embodiment of the spirit of the place, Cousin Miriam seated in her armchair by the fireplace, with its tiles, whereon were depicted, in stirring fashion, many important acts of Old Testament history,—Cousin Miriam, in her soft grey gown, muslin handkerchief, and close-fitting cap, which, despite its stiffness, seemed such a suitable setting for the soft gentle face. Even Cousin Jonathan, flitting

about in his quick bustling fashion, his cheeks red as a winter apple, did not seem out of keeping with the harmony of the picture. He fitted in somehow, perhaps because every one fitted in with Cousin Miriam. Anything discordant did not destroy her charm; she, on the contrary, seemed to bring it into her magic circle.

"Thou hast grown tall and strong, cousin," she said in her Quaker speech, which suited her, like her grey gown and her prim cap, "grown also to be a great man since I saw thee last. But in my eyes thou wilt always remain, cousin, I fear me, a little lad! An old woman has difficulty, thou knowest, in remembering that the young ones grow up."

Then Captain Calverley presented his friend, Mr. Philip Honeywood, and Mistress Sweetapple shook him by the hand, and bid him welcome.

"Although it is in our eyes but a sad necessity that brings thee here, friend, still Jonathan and I could not learn with peace that our own cousin's child was seeking the shelter of the inn, when we had a roof to offer him."

Cousin Jonathan, whilst his wife talked, flitted about seeing to the supper, which, ere long, he came to tell the travellers awaited them. Later on, as they sat in the parlour, cheered and refreshed, Captain Calverley withdrew a little from the circle of light round the wide fireplace, and by the straight line drawn across his forehead, which appeared there whenever his mind was perplexed or harassed, Mr. Honeywood, knowing his friend as well as he did, recognised that he would be angered to be disturbed, so left his side, and drawing a chair up to Cousin Miriam's side, was soon con-

fiding to her, in lowered voice, a great part of his own early life and hopes.

That was one of Miriam's many charms, that no one was too young, or too widely divergent from herself in thought, acts, or hopes, but that she could sympathise with their plans. It is not that charity, which is only another name for love, that stretcheth its arms forth so wide, that it embraceth all things?

So Miriam, the judge's wife, the peaceful gentle Friend, could listen, and with sympathy, to the young ardent soldier by her side, burning with hopes for himself, and yet, withal, it was his friend's name that was ever on his lips, his friend's career that was to end in the victor's laurel wreath, while he, Phil Honeywood, applauded from a lower level, honoured only by reason of his great unwavering love for his friend.

And Mistress Sweetapple listened, and now and then spoke in her low winning voice, until Phil, with that ready adaptiveness which made him friends wherever he appeared, soon found himself talking of his home and home love, to this gentle-eyed woman, whilst the hours passed, and Cousin Jonathan slept over his paper, and Ralph Calverley still pondered, with drawn brows, over a sheet of paper before him, planning out future successes thereupon. Then ten o'clock struck, and Jonathan woke up with a little start, and said, "The paper was vastly interesting, vastly, and it was of a certainty time for prayers and bed;" and the two soldiers, such a strange incongruous element in the quiet Quaker household, found themselves kneeling down, listening to Cousin Miriam's soft voice, praying for blessings on all those about her by name, and in the loving old-time fashion, drawing

into the narrow circle of home those two strangers who were resting beneath their roof.

So the day's work ended with a cheerful good-night from Cousin Jonathan, a tender one from Cousin Miriam, and the two friends were led away by staid Mary to their bed-chambers,—Ralph still to plot and plan over future glory—Philip to think of the soft motherly face that had smiled upon him and blessed him; and from that, being but young, his thoughts wandered to some words of Cousin Miriam's, spoken as they sat exchanging confidences in the firelight—words describing with all the earnestness of love, the fair maid she cared for so well.

Thus it fell out, that whilst she lay dreaming of the hero of the hour in the moonlight, it was Philip Honeywood whose last thoughts, ere sleep closed his eyes, were of unknown Geraldine Hawthorne.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEEDLE AND THE SWORD.

“Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.”

ALL the day following the arrival of Captain Calverley and his friend, the little village street of Endicot was gay with an unusual crowd passing to and fro. The inn, with the banner fluttering in the breeze above its doorway, was besieged from early morning with eager volunteers, anxious to enrol themselves under its conquering folds.

Ralph Calverley, seated in a small room up-stairs,

had no lack of applicants willing and able to fight for freedom; for the news that he would be there to take down the names of the recruits, had been advertised far and near for many previous days. But now at length the afternoon was drawing in, and he found himself at liberty, the room being empty of all save himself and his friend, to consider that which he had already accomplished.

"'Tis hard work," he said, throwing himself back wearily in his chair. "I wish it were well over, and we were on our way to Gayfield!"

"I am not averse to it for a change," his comrade replied, sauntering over to the window and looking down at the groups in the street below—of women crowding round some new recruit to hear his account of the great man he had just left—of children, gazing open-eyed at the unusual spectacle of the flag drooping in the still evening air above the window, and the grey figure of the soldier standing in the doorway.

"It is amusing—it is new," in his quick tones, so unlike the serious ones of his friend: "and, above all, there is your kinswoman to return to! A woman like—— Ah," breaking off abruptly, "more of them! Well beloved as you are by your devoted slave, yet have I an engagement. I must go. I can stand no more." Then suddenly changing his tones, and addressing his serious silent companion—"Say, do you need my presence here any more, for if not, I think I would fain return to Endicot House?"

Captain Calverley brought his mind, with an effort, from the sheet of figures and calculations before him.

"It were well we should remain as long as possible," he said slowly, rather as if beginning a conversation than joining in one already entered upon. "And do you not call to mind friend Jonathan's parting warning?" with a half smile. "I should think even *you*, with all the distaste you have to doing one thing for long together, would prefer questioning embryo soldiers to finding yourself at a 'sewing meeting.'"

"On the contrary," replied Mr. Honeywood, quietly, "I am returning so as to attend it."

His companion looked at him for one moment in the most intense astonishment, and then burst out laughing. It was such an unusual sound to fall from his lips, that Philip caught the infection and laughed too.

"You are incorrigible," then, he said. "I always knew you would inconvenience yourself mightily for the faintest chance of getting a sight of a pretty woman, and of a certainty you have proved it. But I warn you, from previous experience of village beauties, your chance is but a poor one."

"I am going to risk it, however," replied Mr. Honeywood, gaily; "all for the sake of seeing Mistress Geraldine Hawthorne."

"And who," began Captain Calverley. But ere he could finish his sentence, the landlord had entered with a message, and whilst he was attending to it, Phil Honeywood, whistling a gay French air, strolled out of the room.

Left alone—for Master Winthrop, who had brought word that, late as it was, yet another man desired to speak to him,—Captain Calverley got up and walked

up and down the room with bent head, thinking deeply. All shadow of gaiety had fled from his face, as all remembrance of his friend's light words had faded from his memory. The moment was too important, and the anxiety he felt too great to leave his mark upon the age, to permit of more than a momentary shifting of his mind from the all-important topic. The idea he wished to embody and see carried out was a border war, waged by irregular volunteer troops, which should harass the English until they were constrained to fall back upon the towns, where it was to be expected they would find but a grim welcome awaiting them, in the shape of George Washington's more carefully trained soldiers. But for this the supplies both of men and arms must be almost inexhaustible. Like Napoleon, his cry was "men, men;" for with soldiers alone could it be hoped to build up this new republic.

Then in the future—if he ever had time to let his thoughts wander from the more immediate present—in that future he saw visions, all indistinct as they were, of power to be gained, and once gained, it surely would show lack of will if it were permitted to slip away again; for in a republic there would be the only thing he fancied he would ever require—a chance. "For it is here," he said to himself, "I could rule. I know it—I feel it; but in the meantime I must work." Then the door was opened to admit Josiah Sumner.

"You wanted to see me?" asked Captain Calverley.

"I did, Captain. I have come to ask you if you could take me into your regiment?"

"I am sorry, but that is now impossible; the vacancies are all filled up in it. But there are other regiments: you wish to volunteer?"

"No, thanks, Captain," replied Josiah, quietly. "I would have served under you if it might have been so. If not, I will return to the farm and wait. The time will perchance come yet." He half turned away as he spoke.

Ralph Calverley had a quick eye for a possible soldier. There was something in Josiah's quiet figure and few words which pleased him, appealed to his sense of the fitting. "A good man lost if he goes back to his farm," was the thought in his mind as he lifted his hand and said, "Stay one moment."

Josiah paused.

"Is there any particular reason why you would serve under me in preference to any other commander?"

"Ebenezer Sumner is my brother."

Now Ebenezer Sumner was the name of the young man that Captain Calverley had ridden back to seek on the battle-field. It was the saving of that young man's life which had first rendered him a hero in the eyes of the people of Endicot.

"If I can arrange it, I will," he said, after that second pause. "Come in to-morrow afternoon, and I will acquaint you with my decision."

"Thank you. Good-night, Captain," said Josiah, and went out satisfied, leaving Ralph equally satisfied; for, far above caring, as most men thought him, for the opinion of those about him, yet in truth, deep down in his heart, there was a ring of satisfaction at every evidence of his popularity with his fel-

lows. Popularity may, in its way, be made of much service.

It was growing late and dark now—so dark that the landlord opened the door again to ask if he should not bring a light.

“No, I thank you, my work is over for to-day; I am going home.”

Perhaps one reason why Ralph Calverley was so much considered, lay in the fact of his studious courtesy towards those who might have esteemed themselves his inferiors. This, in those days of free and easy familiarity, was not without its good effect; and whereas Philip Honeywood was loved by those about him for that free kindliness which knew so exactly where to draw the line—an invisible line, which no one had ever been known to overstep—Ralph Calverley gained the admiration that was freely lavished upon him, by means of the reserve which none ever penetrated, and which, therefore, held all kind of latent unknown possibilities well out of sight. For it was always the reserve of a gentleman; if he did not talk about his plans, did not discuss his private affairs, neither did he intrude on the privacy of others, however lowly their state in life might be.

It was quite dark when Captain Calverley crossed the threshold of the “William Penn” to mount his horse, nevertheless there were many spectators still awaiting his departure—a little group, chiefly composed of women and children, whose husbands and fathers were away at the war, or who had that day thrown in their lot with those members of the national army. They pressed close round him as he mounted his horse, and as he rode away there arose a burst of

hearty cheers for "Calverley's Horse" and its captain, which courtesy he acknowledged by a quick movement of his head, as he vanished into the increasing gloom.

Half an hour later the heavy oaken door of Cousin Jonathan's sitting-room was slowly pushed open, and a man entering, with thoughtful eyes and furrowed brow, lifted his hand as if to ward off the glare of light which dazzled him after the darkness outside. He was tall and strongly built, with dark, deep-set, thoughtful eyes, and the hair that was pushed back from his forehead was just tinged with grey. The face was serious, grave; life was too arduous a matter for him often to indulge in laughter, or even smiles. We cannot at any price buy back at life's finish the golden moments wasted in its commencement, was a great portion of the creed that had won him his success.

Standing thus, framed in the oaken doorway in riding dress, his short military cloak still thrown across his shoulders, his hand uplifted as the sudden glare of light disturbed his thoughts, it was that Ralph Calverley first entered into the life of Geraldine Hawthorne.

What he saw was a long low parlour, penetrated with the delicate scent of lavender; Cousin Miriam seated by the fire, busy knitting, her husband flitting about her, and some ten or twelve girls hard at work, these latter forming a dim indistinct background for the lifted golden head, wide grey eyes, and tender sweet mouth of a girl exactly opposite him, seated at the further end of the room.

That second's pause whilst their eyes met, passed unnoticed by those around.

He came in then, closing the door behind him, and with a half apology for disturbing them, walked up to Miriam's side, and took a chair beside her. There was a little movement amongst the assembled maidens as he did so, a sort of return to regularity of breathing after a long-drawn breath of excitement; but under drooped eyelashes many furtive looks stole towards this gallant stranger, who was writing his name with his sword on the history of his country. Only the fair head was never once lifted, not one glance from those grey eyes wandered towards the fireplace.

Philip Honeywood, quite at his ease, was moving about the room, now talking to one, now to another; now helping to pick up a dropped stitch in Miriam's knitting, in which he said he was very skilled, and again wrinkling into a laugh Cousin Jonathan's rosy-cheeked face. Only Captain Calverley seemed and felt out of place, and if it had not been for the bent head in the distance, he would have dared all those many eyes and crossed the room again. But there was something, he knew not what, in the expression of the eyes that had met his as he entered the room, that fascinated him, and seemed to charm him to the spot. He must look into them again.

"Who is she?" he asked, in a low voice, under the cover of the conversation going on around.

"That is Geraldine Hawthorne," replied Miriam, proudly, following the direction of his eyes. "The especial child of my adoption," she added, and then she raised her voice and called, "Geraldine!"

Immediately the girl rose and crossed the room. There was something in her firm slow walk, in the way she carried her head, that was like hearing a tender perfect strain of music, with a mystic under-current of sadness running through it; and Ralph, watching her as she stood before Miriam, her work in her hands, could not turn his eyes away from her.

"Geraldine," Miriam said, taking the girl's shapely hand in her withered ones, "it is eight o'clock. Wilt thou take the children away, and see that they have their supper? Afterwards," she went on, handing back the work, which she had been examining, "come back here to fetch thy sewing."

Without a glance in the direction of those eyes, which, under cover of a hand raised to shelter them from the fire, had followed her every movement, she turned to obey Miriam's request.

"It is eight o'clock, maidens," Miriam said, rising, and all the busy fingers ceased working, and began folding up the pieces of sewing. Then one by one they all advanced to wish "good-night" to Friend Jonathan and his wife, to steal a glance at the silent stranger, and to exchange a word with the talkative one, and then to depart, under Geraldine's care, to partake of the supper provided for them.

Those weekly sewing evenings were a great event in the village of Endicot; for Endicot was the great house, and to be admitted there on these friendly terms was in itself a species of distinction. Then, how much magnified was the honour when it necessitated being beneath the same roof for a couple of hours with the hero of the day! To be able to speak for the future of him as of one whom they had seen

thus familiarly, and whose chosen friend they had talked and laughed with! To all, perhaps, if the truth were known, this same pleasant-eyed, laughing, cheerful friend, was a more charming remembrance than the grand silent man himself—to all, that is, excepting to Mistress Hawthorne. To her, the playful light-heartedness of the one did not appeal,—indeed she would have been disappointed if he, the ideal hero, had proved such a one; whereas the silent grave man, who had gazed on all around with preoccupied face and mind, seemed exactly calculated to fill the niche left vacant and ready, waiting in her dreamful fancy, his appearance.

“Ah, Cousin Miriam!” exclaimed Philip, as the door closed behind the girls, “did you not tell me to call you Cousin Miriam?” drawing a footstool up to the old lady’s feet, and sitting down thereon.

“Cousin Miriam is a good name,” she said, gently; for in those three days Phil Honeywood had stolen for himself a place in Miriam’s heart, ever wide open for those who needed love, “though, I fear, I am somewhat old to possess such a youthful cousin.”

“Well, what I was about to say before we turned off into the matter of relationship was, that you were of a certainty right,—she is lovely. Ah,” with a sigh, “she is like a fair picture, a sweet strain of music!—anything you will that is tender, and grave, and grand.”

“Yes, she is a fair maiden,” replied Miriam, approvingly, “and so dear to me.”

“Who is she?” asked Captain Calverley.

“A marvel in truth,” cried Mr. Honeywood. “She has indeed a notable triumph to record—she has

had a word of interest accorded her by the woman-hater!"

A little flush rose to Ralph's dark cheek, but whether of annoyance at his friend's words, or shame at his own question, it were difficult to decide.

Miriam noticed it and, with kindly tact, laying her hand on his, said softly, "Cousin Calverley is no woman-hater,—he loved his mother."

"Ah, but mothers stand alone!" cried warm-hearted Philip Honeywood; and, after a second's pause, "Cousin Miriams come next."

"Thou art such a flatterer, that I think we must postpone our next sewing-meeting till after the recruiting is well over, for fear thou shouldst not spend all thy store on an old woman."

"That would be, perchance, a wise precaution if Mistress Hawthorne is coming again, else, I fear me, I shall carry but a heavy heart away with me to Gayfield."

"It is not for *thy* heart I fear," replied Miriam.

By-and-by the door opened to readmit Mistress Hawthorne. The tall womanly figure—for it had none of the unformed slim grace of girlhood, but seemed already, despite her youth, to have reached maturity of outline—came across the room to Miriam's side, to bid her farewell.

"They have departed?" she asked. "Then rest with us a short while. But first let me present you," taking the girl's hand in hers, "to Captain Calverley."

The slightest possible flush overspread the delicate face as she curtsied to Ralph. For a second the grave eyes were lifted to his, with something of the same expression in them that had first arrested his

attention in the doorway; then the tall figure, in its narrow white muslin gown, had turned to answer a question of Cousin Jonathan's.

"Where is Pen?"

"She has left, Cousin Jonathan. Mother wished for her at home so soon as she had finished her work."

"And has Mistress Pen left you to return home alone?" questioned Mr. Honeywood, on the alert in a moment.

"Yes; but 'tis only a few steps down the avenue, then across the road, and I am in our own orchard. I am not afraid," with a little smile.

"No, I should guess not," with a glance of admiration; "nevertheless, you will permit me to walk home with you."

"No, I thank you, sir," interrupted Mistress Hawthorne, gravely. "It is good of you all the same," she added; still——" and she looked towards Miriam, as if for help."

"Mary will take the lantern and walk home with thee, Geraldine. It is better than going alone, as it has grown so dark;" and the discussion seemed thus ended.

After a little more talk, Mary came in, with a hood over her stiff cap, lantern in hand, to inform Mistress Hawthorne she was ready. Good-nights were exchanged. Cousin Jonathan and Cousin Miriam kissed their guest, and Mr. Honeywood held out his hand with a pleasant smile.

The other man drew back whilst the farewells were being said, and Mistress Hawthorne turned towards him to drop a little reverential curtsy; but be-

fore she had time to do so, he moved a step forward, and took her hand in his. Such a strong, firm clasp it was. Then he it was who walked with her to the doorway, Cousin Jonathan on her other side, leaving Philip Honeywood with Miriam, struck quite dumb by this new phase in his comrade's character. But he did not allude to it afterwards; Geraldine Hawthorne's name was not so much as mentioned between them.

There was something about Ralph Calverley that precluded any idea of *badinage* or familiarity; indeed it was only Philip Honeywood who had ever overstepped in the smallest degree the thin invisible line that seemed drawn between him and the rest of the world; but even he sometimes felt that, old companions as they were, much as they had done and suffered together, that yet there was an innermost circle even he might never hope to reach.

CHAPTER VI.

HERO-WORSHIP.

“She stood beneath her rose-flushed apple-trees.”

“AND if your guests would so far honour us, father bid me say they would be most welcome.”

“I will ask them, Geraldine. But see, here comes one who will answer for himself. Mr. Honeywood, here is Geraldine Hawthorne, sent up by her father to invite us to a merry-making at his house. What dost thou say? Yes or no?”

For a second Mr. Honeywood did not reply, almost seemed to forget words were needed, whilst looking at

the tall girl's figure before him. But as she turned her eyes from Cousin Miriam's face, and raised them in expectation of his reply, his own slowly fell; and for one usually so ready with jests and light words, his answer was a little graver than might be expected.

"For myself, madam, I can answer at once, so far as my will is my own; but Mistress Hawthorne must bear in mind that I am but a soldier, at another's beck and call, and we may be far enough away before to-morrow week. But," he added, they two standing a little on one side, as Cousin Miriam bent over a dropped stitch, "believe me, if so called away, obedience will seem hard."

The words seemed graver than the occasion warranted, and Mistress Hawthorne answered them seriously.

"Obedience is a simple duty; so it appears to me. Less difficult by far than many others."

Some remark hovered on Philip's lips; but ere he could speak, Cousin Miriam called upon Geraldine's young eyes to save her old ones, and the *tête-à-tête* was at an end. But it could be easily resumed. There were no great difficulties in the way of meeting in primitive Endicot; and even if there had been, the will goes a long way in overcoming them.

The two strange warriors, as was only natural, taking into consideration the halo that surrounded their names, found many worshippers amongst the lads and maidens of Endicot; and as the days passed, and no evil was recorded of them, especially when the first Sunday had seen the stern face and straight figure of Ralph Calverley, and that of his younger,

slighter companion, by Cousin Jonathan's side in the village meeting-house, then even the most cautious mothers began to feel less anxious as to whether the eyes of these strange wolves were turned towards their own sheepfold, and to relax a little from the stiffness which had at first characterised them; and even at length they so far unbent as to make weak little attempts at friendliness.

Invitations to supper, after the day's work was over, now and then were bashfully offered by awkward lads who had a mind to join the army, and were accepted gratefully, at least as far as Mr. Honeywood was concerned, though always on his return he would say in that sweet winning manner that had won old Cousin Miriam's heart at first, that not the prettiest girl in Endicot could win him from his first allegiance.

"Not even Geraldine Hawthorne?" Miriam would answer with a smile.

"What! Compare a first love with a second! That is an impossibility."

And with such replies, Cousin Miriam was fain to rest content. But though she said little, she thought and observed much. Her other guest weighed upon her, though she did not acknowledge as much, even to Jonathan. He was too still, too self-engrossed, to please her; and not all her love for his dead mother could set her quite at her ease when in his presence.

As to Captain Calverly himself, in the admiring eyes of his friend, he was just the same man he had always been,—a serious man of business, who heeded not the light words of his companion, whose heart and mind were alike under his control,—a man who

neither gave nor required confidence. He went about his work as usual; as usual, also, he spoke to no one, except on business, leaving to Phil to accept or refuse the invitations from the people round, ignoring, as he had always done, that it was possible for him to share the proffered hospitality. Only in one thing was he unlike himself, or rather the self Phil had known so long, and that was, that on the Sunday morning, when Jonathan and Miriam stood in the doorway, prepared to start for the little chapel, whose tinkling bell could be heard in the distance, he saw, without word of warning, Captain Calverley's tall figure appear, with the evident intention of accompanying them.

Many eyes were turned in the direction of the strangers during the service; and it is to be feared that in consequence there were many wandering thoughts amongst the little congregation; but it may quite safely be presumed that Captain Calverley was unconscious of them. Glances from bright eyes were things which had influenced him but little all his life.

There was one figure, however, he could scarcely help observing, whether it pleased him to note it or not—the figure of Geraldine Hawthorne. She was seated close beside him, having in her charge several younger members of the congregation. But no one could have accused her of wandering glances, or, if appearances were to be trusted, of wandering thoughts. So quiet was she, so beautiful in her calm, unwavering attention, that Ralph Calverley found himself at length, almost unconsciously, watching her every movement. She remained ignorant for long of the interest she had apparently excited. It was only as time passed on, and the little ones about her began to grow weary,

that she had occasion to turn her head. But of a sudden a piercing cry came from one of her little flock. It was uttered by a child seated behind her, and at the sound Mistress Hawthorne looked round in anxiety. The sufferer was easily to be distinguished. At the sound of its own voice, at the awful pause made by the minister, at the many pairs of eyes turned upon it, its courage gave way, and it sobbed aloud.

“What is it?” Geraldine asked in low tones, bending over the child; but it only cowered away from her, crying ever louder and louder.

There was a second’s pause, a second’s embarrassment, and then Mistress Hawthorne lifted the sobbing creature in her strong arms, and bore it out of the chapel. It was as she did so, as in that strong but tender fashion she took the child in her arms, whilst it clung about her neck with such evident sense of security, that their eyes met, and once again Captain Calverley saw that soft delicate blush spread itself over her countenance.

She bore the child outside, hushed his sobs, and heard the hesitating tale of how Nat Ickley, who sat next him, had pricked him, and that he had not meant to scream out and be naughty, and in time she contrived to soothe him. But after he had grown quiet again, they did not re-enter the meeting-house.

Seated side by side in the fresh morning air, Timothy Vance listened whilst Mistress Hawthorne, in low soft tones, talked gently to him. Through all his after-life little Tim never forgot that morning, nor the beautiful lady who comforted him in his despair. Then, the little service over, the door opened, and the con-

gregation poured out. Mistress Hawthorne was at once sought out by the Sweetapples.

"Good-morning Mistress Hawthorne; and how is the little lad now?" It was Mr. Honeywood who spoke. "Why, what happened, little one?" And in two minutes he was listening to the tale of sorrow afresh from the lips of the sufferer.

"He has a winning way, has he not?" Cousin Miriam asked.

"Yes," Geraldine replied; "he must have, for Tim is so shy, he will not speak to many."

"Children's intuitions may be trusted, Geraldine. They never mistake friend for foe."

"No," Mistress Hawthorne answered, a little absently, as Captain Calverley approached her.

"Mistress Hawthorne, would you present me to your mother? I hear that to her kindness I owe an invitation to her house." For herein lay another fact that had caused a moment's thought to Mr. Honeywood; for the time of their presence in Endicot having elapsed the day before Madam Hawthorne's dance, Captain Calverley had decided, without giving any why or wherefore, that he would remain on till the day after, so that they could both attend it.

They turned away together, these two, followed by many a curious, many an awestruck gaze; for Ralph Calverley still occupied the pedestal on which the people of Endicot had first enthroned him, and it is not always easy to remain on a pedestal for long. Even in Captain Calverley's eyes, unobservant as they usually were to note aught about a woman, there shone some faint perception of the stately beauty of the girl by his side. To Geraldine herself the moment was a

little fraught with awe—this finding herself leading this man, who was the hero of so many of her dreams, to be presented to her mother.

Madam was flattered with the attention, however, and all smiles and pleasant words, and it did not come within her province to be awestruck by any one, hero or not. So she curtsied to Captain Calverley, told him she was glad to hear he was to honour her birthday gathering; then wondered if it was not growing late, and if her husband would not be needing her; and finally asked him if he would accompany them homewards, and be made acquainted with Mr. Hawthorne.

Before replying, Captain Calverley turned his eyes towards Geraldine's face, as if half expecting an encouraging word or glance; but she was looking gravely at him with no answering smile, merely awaiting his decision.

"Yes," he said courteously, "it would be a pleasure to him to accompany them." Whereat Madam turned homewards with a neighbour, and soon hurried on, with the fear upon her that her husband would be feeling neglected, and Geraldine was left to follow with Ralph.

Pen, beaming smiles on all around, and with a jest and bright word for every one, was for the moment forgotten.

It was a still sunny day, unusually warm for the time of year, and Ralph Calverley, sauntering through the green lanes, found himself forgetting his work, his soldiers, the hopes and fears for which he lived, in the contemplation of his companion. There was something peculiarly winning in the unexpressed but subtly

felt homage of this queenly woman, which filled his mind with new sensations—sensations scarcely comprehended by the man who had for so long had no one but himself to think for, no interests but his own to consider, no thoughts of another life outside the one he lived—a life where home, wife, and children might form the component parts, and the distraction of ambition might be forgotten in a dream of love. But they were only sensations, vague thoughts, which scarcely clothed themselves even in thought language, but still the shadow of them was felt, and they served to soften him. He was less unapproachable than usual, Mistress Hawthorne felt, and the walk home, which at the outset she had considered with awe, soon assumed pleasanter proportions.

Arrived at the farm, Madam informed them Mr. Hawthorne was resting, and not quite ready to see them, and that it would perhaps be as well to take a turn in the garden first; and nothing loath, Geraldine and her companion obeyed.

Years and years afterwards, when everything calm and smooth was an impossible, never-again-to-be-realised dream,—when trouble, sorrow, and the very darkness of death had enveloped them,—the memory of this Sabbath afternoon would now and again rise up before them both. To Geraldine, as a remembrance of home, that first tender memory of a loving nature, which nothing later can quite blot out, a bright sunny day in the old home garden, when she was only awaking slowly from happy girlish dreams and fancies, to go forth, all unprepared as she was, to battle with a most terrible world. To Ralph Calverley, as a strange tender little glimpse of possible rest and peace, possible, that

is, for others, never for himself; as one might turn one's eyes from a battle-field up to a blue cloud-flecked sky overhead, and thus seeing it, for a moment half sigh for the peace above, knowing so well the struggle below.

"What a lovely old house and garden!" he said at length, as, having made the tour of it, they stood leaning against the gate that faced the orchard where Geraldine Hawthorne had dreamed away one long afternoon. "I suppose you have lived all your life here?"

"Yes, all my life," repeated Geraldine, with something like a sigh. "Sometimes I think I would fain see the world. Endicot is small, is it not?"

"Full large enough to live in—how many—— Nineteen years, is it not?" with an inquiring glance. "And the world is an ill place for children,—home is safer."

"Ah, yes," she said, gently; "if one is alone, of course. But anywhere it would be sad in such a case."

"Do you think loneliness so grievous, then?"

"Utter loneliness? yes," she replied. "Though it is a pleasure to be by one's self at times, is it not? just because it is so good to think and waste one's time in dreams; but then that is no longer the same thing, for I know, however tiresome I may be, I am always sure of love. My home-love, of course, it is always there awaiting me; but you—your loneliness—— Ah, I feel pity for that!"

Something almost akin to amusement touched Captain Calverley as he listened to this girl's words. That he, the envy, the idol of all who knew him,

should be esteemed by her as deserving of pity! It was the first time, now he came to think of it, any one had ever pitied him in all his life.

"And in what manner did I come to merit your pity?" he asked.

She answered quite gravely, "It was a long time ago, when we first heard about you; the day you saved Ebenezer Sumner, you know. Pen and I were with Cousin Miriam, and she told us about you, and that you had no one left belonging to you in all the world—no one to care that day whether you survived it or not—no one to rejoice in her heart at the honour you had won. And it seemed to me," she ended simply, "the most grievous thing I had ever heard."

Ralph Calverley was touched, strangely touched, at the girl's words, spoken in those low full tones. He moved a step nearer, and crossing his arms on the bar of the gate, looked down with troubled dark eyes into the tender grey ones.

"You were right to pity me," he said, an unwonted abruptness in his tones, "though the world would mock if they heard you. I am supposed to have gained everything a man can wish for, or to be in the fair way of gaining it. I am supposed to be a hardened, ambitious soldier of fortune, and nothing more. Perchance it is so; but I tell you that somewhere, far, far down, hidden well out of sight, are the dregs of what was once the heart of a loving son. And Mistress Hawthorne," his voice trembling a little in his suppressed eagerness, "I tell you also that your words are true. On that very night, yea," stretching forth his arms, "and often-times since, I would have bought back

my mother's life with everything I hold most dear on earth!"

The unusual betrayal of his feelings seemed to calm him. With an effort he drew himself up, and said, "I must ask your pardon, I am speaking of what can have but small interest for you. May we cross the road yonder and walk into the orchard? The country is so pleasant after the hard days I have lately known."

And Geraldine, a little bewildered by the sudden change of tone, acquiesced. They wandered beneath the trees; the blossoms were nearly all over now, only one or two late flowers still clung to the sprays that had been so luxurious but a few days before. Captain Calverley did not again speak of his past,—he was once more the unapproachable hero of the hour; but Geraldine, feeling she possessed a key to his inner thoughts, did not feel nearly so much in awe of him as she had done before.

"I pass a great deal of my time here," she said, standing under the shelter of the apple-trees.

"What do you do?"

"Nothing," she replied, blushing; "at least, I fear me, that is most often the case. I am sadly forgetful," she acknowledged, "and time goes so swiftly when it is bright and sunny, and one has so many things to think about."

"And what do you think about?"

"I used to think a great deal about you," she answered simply, so simply that he did not even smile. "That was, of course, before I saw you. I used to marvel what the man who did the things that we were wont to read of, would resemble. One cannot well imagine."

"Worshipping an *unknown* hero!" and Ralph laughed.

"Cannot one? Why, heroes are all more or less unknown, or unreal, are they not? We only know them by their acts; and to know a man's acts alone," she concluded, quietly, "is oft but to know him as little as if we formed an opinion of him from his words."

"A rare bit of wisdom," he replied; and the colour rose to Geraldine's cheeks at the discovery that she had been thinking aloud. "But I fear me but few act upon it. We are all too eager to mount the judgment-seat on the smallest provocation. I myself would fain be amongst the number. But into what serious channels our talk has glided! Of a truth I should be content to leave to Phil the society of ladies, seeing how unfit I am to understand them. And here he comes, marvelling, no doubt, what has detained us so long—and your pretty laughing cousin is with him."

"You mistake, sir; she is not my cousin."

"Not your cousin!" repeated Captain Calverley, in a tone of surprise, and he looked inquiringly at his companion, as the two couples drew nearer to one another.

"Pen is my niece."

"And what is her name?" he went on; "I have never heard it yet."

"Do not ask," said Geraldine, pausing so as to insure that he alone heard her words. "Pray," speaking entreatingly, "*never* ask, and always be very kind to her. It is a very grievous story, and she has no name but Penitence."

CHAPTER VII.

“THERE IS NO ARMOUR AGAINST FATE.”

“For it was love who came to me,
Who might not know his name.”

SOME one had observed those beseeching eyes raised to Captain Calverley's face,—some one had noted that whispered confidence, and had often pondered over it since—had grown, indeed, to ponder over it these last two days in a way that annoyed himself. What did it—could it—matter that a certain beautiful girl should have somewhat to say to the man he loved best in the world, that was not meant for his ears? One of the gods, we are told, is blind; but sometimes it seems as if this youngest of immortals throws away his bandage, and sees *more*, instead of less, than is advisable.

But was it possible that it was Eros who was answerable for the perplexing thoughts that were bewildering Phil Honeywood's brain? Such was, of a certainty, not his own view of the case. He only, with preternatural acuteness, seemed to comprehend why it was that Captain Calverley had decided they should stay on in Endicot till after Mr. Hawthorne's dance; and with an ill-defined sensation of reluctance, unlike his usual outspoken freedom, he felt averse to asking his leader the reason for this unwonted change in his plans.

But all the previous speculations were forgotten when at length the eventful evening had arrived, and he and Captain Calverley together entered the long

room at Mr. Hawthorne's, appropriately garlanded for the occasion.

They were aware—nor could they well fail to be—of the attention their entrance excited, of the many eyes that were turned away from lawful partners to rest upon the two strange soldiers as they passed to make their bows to Madam, and to be made acquainted with her crippled husband, whose sofa had been brought into the room, so that he might enjoy himself with a glimpse of the merriment until he should grow weary.

Perhaps Mr. Honeywood lingered a little longer than was strictly necessary by the old man's side, when, after glancing round the room, he ascertained that the figure of no stately Geraldine graced it.

Captain Calverley did *not* pause in the entrance. He walked by Madam's side across the room, bending his tall head to listen to her conversational attempts; but when she suggested presenting him to one of the maidens present, with a view to his joining the dance, he declined a little abruptly.

"I but rarely dance," he went on. "Allow me to remain here—for the present at least—and look on at a scene which has the charm of such entire novelty." And Madam, not daring to contradict this unsmiling man, whom, in her heart of hearts, she held in a good deal of awe, acquiesced, and, with a half apology, turned to speak to some other friends, leaving Captain Calverley where he had elected to be left—standing up very straight and stiff against the wall that faced the door of entrance. Curiously out of place he appeared amongst the green boughs and leafy decorations that surrounded him; and his grave stern face

was just as little in accord with the smiles and laughter of the merry-makers about him.

But if Captain Calverley's mind almost involuntarily drifted away from the present scene to graver matters—to wars and rumours of wars—Phil Honeywood's was more attuned to his surroundings. The old master of the house was losing his usually worn fretful expression under the influence of his companion's cheery talk, and was talking himself, in a happy rambling fashion, of when he was young and had joined in the gaieties that now he could only look at, and for a brief moment he was forgetting self in recalling the girl-wife and the memories that those old days had called up.

“Are you happy, father? Are you enjoying your birthday dance?”

The low caressing tones fell on Phil's ear with the charm of magic.

“It would be wellnigh impossible for us not to be enjoying ourselves, Mistress Hawthorne. You will surely now add to my happiness by dancing once with me?”

“I think not,” she replied softly; “though I thank you, sir, all the same, but I am engaged to father.”

“No, no, child,” said Mr. Hawthorne, with unusual unselfishness; “you must favour the young as well as the old.”

“You hear?” questioned Mr. Honeywood. “Your father could not be so cruel as to keep you to himself; and besides”—with a laugh—“we must let him also have his share of partners.”

Geraldine smiled in answer to his light words, and moved to his side; and at that very moment Captain

Calverley's thoughts returned to the things about him, and looking down the long room, through the intervening greenery, he saw the tall figure of beautiful Geraldine Hawthorne, the head, with its crown of golden hair, lifted in the proud way he had learned to know, on her lips that rare sweet smile, and looking down admiringly on this picture, the grey eyes of Philip Honeywood.

Captain Calverley was a man too well accustomed to take his own way in everything, to wonder what people might find to say of any of his proceedings. He was also a man who knew himself too well to hesitate as to the why and wherefore of his actions. At that moment, as if he had been granted a glimpse of a hidden landscape through the medium of a flash of lightning, he understood his own actions of the last few days. This girl was the reason of his lingering on in Endicot, when everything required his presence in Gayfield. And with the knowledge of what it was he needed, came the determination that he would gain it. In truth, it may be doubted whether it ever flashed across him that on occasions where the woman's answer is required to the man's question, there was the possibility of a refusal. No; he knew what it was he wanted, which was the main point—everything else was easy enough.

Almost as soon as Mistress Hawthorne had given that answering smile, and had turned away with Philip to join the rest now preparing themselves for the mysteries of a country-dance, Captain Calverley was beside them. "One dance, Mistress Hawthorne," he said, "you must promise me."

"Mistress Hawthorne is not in Calverley's Horse,"

interposed Mr. Honeywood. "You must e'en learn to make your requests less resemble your commands."

Though he spoke lightly, there was a most unusually bitter tone in his voice. Gently, gradually, as if through the medium of early dawn, Phil Honeywood was learning, what had been revealed to Captain Calverley by a flash of lightning. But he could not even yet believe it. Ralph, who had never spoken to a woman willingly since he had known him! It was impossible—still——

And meanwhile Geraldine had raised her sweet eyes to his friend's, and had accepted his invitation with trembling pleasure.

"I do not dance," he had said; "but nevertheless, if Mistress Hawthorne would vouchsafe me the honour——" and here Geraldine, with a shy blush, had interposed her timid "Yes." And all the time that Mr. Honeywood was essaying to bring a smile to those sweet lips, Geraldine's thoughts were hovering about that silent onlooker at the merriment around.

"And you are really going to-morrow?" she questioned, and for a brief second marvelled as to what the morrow would seem like when—when things should be just as they used to be.

"Yes, to-morrow! It is strange that we have stayed so long. To-morrow evening you and Mistress Pen must come down the lane and you will see us starting on our way, and with us a motley company of our new recruits; but come a month hence to Boston and you will scarce recognise them, as they pass through the streets there—colours flying, bands playing! Calverley's Horse!"

"Ah, but it must be a grand thing to serve under

such a man!"—the colour flitting into the girl's cheeks as she spoke.

"Yes," and the smiling face before her grew grave. "No one, saving only myself, knows him truly—he *is* a great man; or, perchance, I should rather say, *will be*. He has not accomplished yet everything of which he is capable, but he only awaits the opportunity; and in the times that are coming, methinks he will not have to wait long."

The glow of enthusiasm was in the young man's face as he spoke, and it found a reflection in the girl's shining eyes.

"When the dance is over," he said, "I will tell you why I love him—yes, that is the true word; that is," he hesitated, "if you would care to hear."

For a second Geraldine laid her other hand over the one that rested on his arm, with a little unconscious pressure, and—"Tell me; I would fain hear it," she said, her low tones falling even a little lower than usual. And then the long country-dance commenced—the intricacies of which demanded her full attention. But directly it was over, and the couples had separated, and the musicians had disappeared to refresh themselves with a draught of beer after their labours, Geraldine, moving down the room on Mr. Honeywood's arm in the wake of the other dancers, brought him back to his promise.

"Let us seat ourselves here near father," she said, "so that if he should need me he will not have far to seek for me, and then you can relate to me your story."

Philip obeyed almost involuntarily. The momentary enthusiasm had passed, and he would fain have led

his fair companion to converse of other and more personal matters, on this his last night. But, after all, it might be as well. His talk—even if the burden were Ralph Calverley—would still contain a faint refrain of self, and from this opening he might gently lead to another and a more tender subject.

“We began by being enemies,” he said, with a little nervous laugh; “but that, it is said, is a good foundation for friendship. Then after we had not been long acquainted, I fought a duel——”

Geraldine’s eyes widened with horror, and her heart-beats quickened as she repeated—“A duel? Oh, Mr. Honeywood! wherefore?” Here was a new experience, a new romance, the like of which she had dreamed, the reality of which had never come nigh her sheltered life.

The clear eyes somewhat embarrassed Phil. Nevertheless, with another half-awkward laugh—“But that stage is well over, so we will not talk of it. I have never fought one since, and the enmity has long since given place to the friendship which now is secure enough to outlast”—he paused a second, looked into the fair face upraised to his, and then added firmly—“to outlast everything that might attempt to uproot it.”

“Man’s friendship is of more worth than a woman’s,” said Geraldine, gravely—“at least I fear me it is so.”

“But your love is worth more than ours, so that equalises us once again.”

“Think you ’tis indeed so? It seems to me that women are so weak, so feeble, that, wish as they may, they can do but little for those they love? they are so outside a man’s life, it is but rarely that they

can creep into it; and therefore——" her eyes wandered away as she so spoke; then, with a sudden change of tone—"but, sir, I must pray you to excuse me; my father is gone, and I did not perceive it. I must go and see if he needs anything."

She rose, but before she could move away, Phil had risen too, and had laid a detaining hand on her arm. "You must not leave without completing your sentence," he said. "You were in the midst of telling me how, of necessity, a woman's love must be without a man's life, and that, therefore—now I would fain know the 'therefore' that should have closed your sentence."

"That therefore," she went on quietly, though she coloured a little, "is that a woman lacks something to make her life complete in itself. So it seems to me, sir; but then I am only a girl, and expect, perhaps, too much—at least so Pen says—ever to meet with aught but disappointment."

"Ah, do not say so!" cried Phil, with sudden accents of pity in his voice. "Your life, of a surety, should be full and sweet—lacking nought—with a man's love to hedge it safely in."

He spoke passionately, more passionately than he had perhaps intended, for Geraldine looked up startled, and, withdrawing her hand from his arm, slipped quietly away down the passage to her father's room. He did not, after all, require her. So Mr. Honeywood might have spared himself the pains of anathematising him for his selfishness; for, drawing his beautiful daughter towards him, and looking into her face, he bade her go away and enjoy herself, and not fret about him. He was happy, and if he wanted

her he would send to seek her. So Geraldine, with many promises of a speedy return, departed.

In the dancing-room Mr. Honeywood, exchanging light jests and repartees with Pen,—Pen at her very brightest and prettiest,—was all the time recalling the lovely face he had seen raised to his so short a time since.

“She is beautiful,” he was thinking, “tender, girlish, unselfish, if a little dreamy with her hero-worship, and all the rest of her pretty fancies, which life will soon enough dispel. She can love, too, or her eyes tell lies—love purely and passionately; but the question is, who will call it forth?”

“A sigh, Mr. Honeywood,” laughed Pen; “of what, then, were you thinking?”

“Of love, Mistress Pen.”

“Truly a very fit subject for sighing over. But not love in the abstract; and surely no one here has been so cruel——”

Was there, we may wonder, any special point in her words, as she broke off one sentence, apparently so innocently, and finished with another? “Ah, where is Dinie? Surely grandfather has not been so cruel as to call her away to read him to sleep to-night? I much fear me that he has.” “Mark my words,” said Pen, impressively,—“Dinie will not have a happy life.”

“Why?” questioned Mr. Honeywood, startled.

“Because she is too unselfish,—loves people too much, even when they give her little or naught in return; besides, she dreams too much,—she does not see people as they are, but clothed in her own fancies, and the end of it will be——”

"What?"

"Why, she will marry a dream, and only wake up to find out the reality, so that of necessity she must be miserable."

But whilst Pen and Mr. Honeywood were thus talking of Geraldine, she, in her soft white dress, with the half-opened apple-blossoms in her hair, was stepping quietly down the dull passage towards where the lights of the dancing-room shone in the distance, —towards where, out of the gloom, a tall figure drew near to meet her.

"Mistress Hawthorne!" At the sound of her name, Geraldine paused. "I have come to seek you," Captain Calverley said; "to tell you that my servant has come to find me, informing me that letters of importance have arrived, so that I must quit these scenes at once. I could not, however, depart without bidding you farewell, and telling you that our dance must be deferred."

"Not only deferred, I fear me;" and Geraldine lifted her sweet eyes with a faint troubled shadow in them.

"You *fear* it," said Captain Calverley, quietly taking her hand in his: "then, trust me, it shall *only* be deferred."

For half a second he paused, her hand still in his, looking down on the fair grave face, as if hesitating whether he should say anything more, and then, "I will come and bid farewell to you and yours," he said, "to-morrow, and thank Madam for her kindness, and explain my abrupt departure;" and having listened to Geraldine's low "Yes," with a "Farewell till then," he left her, and hastened away.

For a few minutes after he had gone, Mistress Hawthorne stood still, thinking over his last words, and then Mr. Honeywood's voice roused her from her reverie.

"I have found you," he said gladly; "I was just about to venture into yonder chamber," pointing towards old Mr. Hawthorne's room, "to beg to be allowed to carry you off. However, you are just in time. Madam is bidding us all to supper, so you will give me the pleasure, will you not, of taking you in with me?"

Geraldine slipped her hand within his arm in silence. Mr. Honeywood's pleasant cheerful tones somehow jarred upon her present mood. He did not, however, seem to observe it. As they walked slowly towards the room wherein a choice supper awaited them—a supper which had cost Madam many an anxious hour—he talked on every topic that came uppermost,—a little erratically, if Mistress Hawthorne had been in the humour to notice it, but she was not.

"Ralph is not here," he remarked, as they seated themselves; "at least I do not perceive him."

"No, he has gone home; I have just wished him farewell."

"Ah, he does not often join in any social amusement. It is a pity he does not care more, or least-ways see more, of the world."

"Why?"

"Why! Oh, it is ill for any man to live alone; it narrows them—makes them care too little for their fellows,—and that is neither good nor seemly."

Mistress Hawthorne did not speak much during supper, and her usually loquacious companion be-

came also strangely silent, striving to think in what words he could approach most easily the subject that was lying next his heart. Afterwards, when the guests, after one or two excited dances, were beginning to disperse, and the pretty room to grow empty, he found himself once more standing by Mistress Hawthorne's side,—Mistress Hawthorne, striving to pour balm into pretty wilful Pen's heart on the subject of the non-appearance of Josiah Sumner.

"It is too cruel of him. Madam asked him, and he said he would come." And there was a tiny tear in the corner of Pen's eye.

"Mistress Hawthorne, I pray you, spare me but one moment." And almost unconsciously, Geraldine turned towards Mr. Honeywood, and took his proffered arm. It was only after she had moved away, that she remembered Pen's sorrowful words, and the tears in her bright eyes.

"You must pardon me," she said, looking up, and trying to call together her wandering thoughts; "but Pen is unhappy: I must speak to her."

"Pen unhappy!" he repeated, smilingly. "Look," and he pointed to where that damsel, in her bright coquettish dress, stood with laughter in her eyes and on her lips, exchanging jests and words with a certain young Ezra Mather, the minister's son. "No, she does not need you—and," lowering his voice, "I do."

"Tell me," interposed Geraldine, ignoring his words, and instinctively distrusting the tones of his voice,—“tell me the finish of the tale you began this evening; you never told me for what cause you fought a duel.”

She hesitated.

"No, I did not. Well, if you will listen to me now on another subject, I will tell you all about that after. You shall learn the whole story, and you will know then why we have always been such friends."

"But you will have no further chance," she persisted gently. "You are going away to-morrow."

"No, that is just it, I shall have no other chance, so you must hear me now," leading her across the room to the window, and lifting aside the curtain. "See, on that broad window-seat you can sit down; every one is so happy, they will not concern themselves about us, and we,"—with a half-nervous laugh,—“we will regard together the beauties of the moonlight!"

He rested one knee on the seat as he spoke, and Geraldine, lifting her face, met his grey eyes bent on her with a look in them which made her rise nervously, and say—

"No, Mr. Honeywood, I must return to the others, or mother will be marvelling what we are doing;" but Philip gently laid his hand on her wrist to prevent her from moving.

"Here is Madam," he said, at the same moment; "she has come also to admire the moonlight."

When he spoke, Madam paused, and looked forth as he suggested at the garden, grim and ghostly in the strange light, and beyond at the still apple-orchard lying fair and white, and then she sighed, for there was something awing in its chill beauty, and for a moment the lines of care passed from her face, and it grew young again, gaining a faint resemblance to the lovely girl on whose shoulder her hand rested; then

her eyes turned from the scene outside to the two silent beings by her side, and maybe some memory of her own youth was wafted towards her—some memory from the far-off time before old Mr. Hawthorne came a-wooing—and she turned away in silence and left them together.

"Now is my chance," Philip said softly, "I would not speak now, at such a time when my words must be of necessity so cold, so measured, if it were not that I cannot tell what future opportunity may be offered me." He spoke very low, with a tremble in his voice, and though the girl did not lift her head and look at him from where she sat beneath him, she heard every syllable. "I would I could think there was any hope of your answering 'Yes.' But what am I saying? You *must* say 'Yes.' It is everything to me."

And as Geraldine would have interrupted him, he moved impatiently nearer and stood close beside her, with his back to the few friends still left at the far end of the room. "No, do not reply yet. Hear me; you are so young, and you are a woman, therefore you cannot measure a man's love, cannot comprehend mine. Only say 'Yes.' I trust you. That is all I require; I will await the rest; it must come; it will grow out of the very strength of mine."

"But I cannot," she said softly, raising her eyes shyly to his. "It is such a great gift you offer me, and I am not worthy of it."

"That is nothing," he urged, "only say you will accept it; that is all I ask of you. Keep it, lay it by, do what you will with it, only promise to receive it, and to marry me, and I ask nothing more at present."

Listening to his low passionate tones, Geraldine's heart-beats grew quicker. Here was love; it soothed her to listen to its promises, she who had so often longed for some return to the love that overflowed from her own heart. Looking up into the eager grey eyes, listening to the tender words, a sort of vague feeling came over her that in this love she would find rest—a rest that might save her many a sorrowful hour in the life that was opening out before her; for love received is a safeguard from many troubles that of necessity attend upon love given. But even as she thus thought, indistinctly out of the knowledge that was coming to her, there swept across her a vision of another man—a man with no tenderness in his eyes—and there came the thought of it being told to this other that she, Geraldine Hawthorne, was about to marry his friend.

“No, no; it can never be,” she cried, almost as if in fear. “No, no; anything else, but you must not ask that.”

“The dream is over then, Mistress Hawthorne? Perchance if I had waited? But no,” looking down into the tender dreaming eyes, “you are not one who will change; you will love once, and it will be for ever. But I, alas! will not be the happy man who awakens it. Ah, Geraldine! you cannot dream the pain I am enduring this night.”

Geraldine did not reply at once, but at length she lifted her head, and essayed to say something, and Phil saw the tears shining in her eyes.

“No, do not grieve, sweet love,” he said tenderly. “How can you help it? I would not have you altered, even though another win and wear you; and being as

you are, it is but small wonder I should thus have given my heart into your keeping. I am going now, but with a heavy heart, sweet Mistress, which you may remember is for ever thine, if you should ever wish to demand aught of me."

He paused, as if for some reply, and at length in a somewhat broken voice Geraldine said, "I seem to have nought to say, but that in truth you may believe me, when I say that there is no one in the wide world I shall always esteem as I do Mr. Honeywood. And if there should a time arise in the future when he could serve me, I will not fail to remind him of his words."

"Esteem is a cold word, Mistress Geraldine," he murmured very low; "but remember ever the last half of your speech, I pray of you, for it is some small comfort to think you trust me." He paused again, and the two tears that had shone in Geraldine's eyes he saw fall on to her clasped hands, for her head was still averted.

"Those tears were worth a great deal of love," he said softly. "Good-night," and so passed away, leaving her seated still in the shadow of the deep window.

Philip Honeywood with few "Good-nights" stole away into the quiet night. Under the calm moonlight he was able to think over his love and his sorrow,—to think over the tender beauty of the girl to whom was owing this bitter heartache. "But she is worthy," he said loyally, as he rode slowly homewards—"she is worthy of everything a man can offer, and even if she never changes, as I much fear me she never will, the love that I have given her I shall never wish to

recall, it is hers for ever. She is like an apple-blossom—just as delicate and lovely; and by-and-by the bud will open, and the secret of love give depth and colour to it, but it will always remain pure and delicate, and only he for whom it opens will ever know the full loveliness of the perfect flower.”

Thus Philip Honeywood, growing fanciful in the moonlight.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE APPLE-TREES.

“For telling of his tale no fitter place,
Than this old orchard, sloping to the west,
Through its pink blossom I can trace
Some overlying azure, for the rest
These flowery branches round us interlace,
The ground is hollowed like an empty nest;
Who talks of fame, whilst the religious spring
Offers the incense of her blossoming?”

CLEAR and sunny rose the 28th of May, the last day of these strangers' stay in Endicot. Geraldine was up betimes; but the Endicot Farm was not a house where gaiety overnight was any excuse for idleness the next morning. So everything was just as usual,—last night, with its light and talk, even its strange new experience, its faint glimpse of the “promised land,” vouchsafed by the power of Philip Honeywood's low passionate voice, was already swept away with the things that have been. And to Geraldine it seemed that the everyday life she had known so long, and which had grown dear by force of habit,

had of a sudden become dull and tiresome. Never before had Madam seemed so quick and impatient to find fault, or the household cares so utterly devoid of interest; even her father was unusually fretful and hard to please. The reaction consequent on the excitement of the previous evening was telling on every one. Pen also was anxious. The fortnight's respite had passed, and to-night it was that she had promised to meet Josiah Sumner, and give him a decided answer, and that decided answer was hard to give—harder than ever, with this new gay element stirring about her life. “Well,” with a sigh, “that is over now; they are going away, and I have in truth missed Josiah. I think he might have come last night.”

If Mr. Sumner had been the most cunning instead of the most simple of men, he could not have devised a more successful ruse to draw forth a “Yes” from the lips of Pen, than by thus absenting himself from the birthday party. So both girls were anxious and worried, though for such widely different reasons, and Madam was not slow to discover the fact. She was perhaps a little disturbed at what she herself had observed the previous night; for the behaviour of Phil Honeywood, and his pursuit of her daughter, had not escaped her observant eyes; and, in addition to feeling a little uneasy as to the result of all this, she was curious, and slightly indignant, that her own daughter should have failed to confide in her.

“For he did say something—of that I am convinced.” So Madam vented her foiled curiosity in much scolding, until it was with positive relief Geraldine went, as was her custom, to her father's room, only to find, however, that things were not much

smoother there. Everything was wrong. A headache was the result of last night's noise and confusion.

"My head swims when I try to read, therefore I cannot finish that poem, as I so especially wished to do to-day; and, of course, you cannot stay to read to me?"

"Yes, father, of course I *can*," said Geraldine, soothingly. "I have come to sit with you," with a half-longing look at the sunlight out of doors. "What shall I read?"

"Poetry, I think," and the old man spoke less fretfully. "Select something I know, and then, perhaps, it may end by soothing me to sleep."

Obediently Geraldine lifted down a large volume of Milton, and began reading aloud in her soft full tones. Every now and then she half lifted her eyelids to see if there was any hope of her task being accomplished, but no; life—wide-awake life—was visible in every movement: so she read quietly on, though an undercurrent of hopes and fears were keeping pace with the words she uttered. At length to her listening ears was borne the sound of a horse's hoofs, and her father, hearing them also, opened his eyes, which Geraldine had faint hopes were at length closing in sleep, and demanded impatiently who it was.

"It is Captain Calverley," Geraldine replied, lifting her eyes, and looking across the garden to the narrow road that divided the garden from the orchard, through which road he must needs pass to reach the stables, which lay at the other side of the house. And with a last effort, that could not be repelled, "I think he must be come to say good-bye, father," she said. "He leaves to-day."

"I suppose you will not be needed? Your mother and Pen are within?" and on receiving a quiet "Yes:" "Then continue, my dear,—your voice soothes me delightfully. It is exceedingly tiresome that any one should have passed by, for I think I should have been asleep in another five minutes." Then the old man gently composed himself to listen once more.

"Poor father," his daughter said softly, laying her cool hand on his forehead, and in that attitude she gave herself up to her task again.

But as she sits there, hoping, fearing, and listening for any chance sound or strange voice, and, withal, striving not to let a shadow of these things appear in her tones, the door opens, and Pen's bright face appears in the doorway.

"Di, Madam is asking for you."

"Indeed! and wherefore?" questioned Mr. Hawthorne, irritably; and at the sound of his voice Geraldine, who had risen on Pen's entrance, reseated herself, with something like a sigh.

"Does she really need me, Pen? You see father is ill, and can scarce spare me."

But Pen, who was never averse to doing a kind turn to others when it did not interfere too much with self, noted the expression in Geraldine's eyes—an expression she had but a faint idea they possessed—and was not to be turned from her purpose.

"Yes; Di must come," she repeated, "for Captain Calverley is wishful to bid her adieu, and Madam has sent me to seek her."

"Well, then, I fear you must go, Geraldine; but do not linger longer than is needful, I pray of you. Until Pen entered, my head was certainly getting better."

"I will return directly I have wished him farewell," Geraldine replied, kissing the white forehead, now covered with fretful anxious lines. "Remain quite still, father, until I return."

A sense of gentle soothing calm passed away with her presence—of this the old man was aware; but it is to be doubted if even he quite understood the full charm of her tender womanly ways. Captain Calverley fancied *he* had quite realised them, and even he could not listen quite as calmly as usual to Madam's lively talk, whilst awaiting the result of Pen's embassy. Not that he had any intention of returning unsuccessfully to Endicot House with his farewell words to Geraldine unspoken. No, indeed! Where another man might have sworn at the ill-luck that had deprived him of his opportunity, he would have made his opportunity; he had no idea of bowing resignedly to unpropitious fate, especially when represented by Madam Hawthorne. So, after tarrying a short half-hour answering her stream of questions, and attempting to reply to Pen's bright words, he had risen to say "Good-bye," and, with his hand in Madam's, had inquired after Mistress Geraldine, and had furthermore requested that she might be sent for, as he should not like to set out, as he must do this afternoon, without wishing her farewell. So Madam, a little upset by his gravity, had turned and dismissed Pen to seek for her; and Pen, being even a little abashed by the abstracted looks and the grave polite words that had greeted her brightest sallies, had willingly departed in search of Geraldine.

During her absence, Captain Calverley had attempted no further conversation with Madam. He

had remained standing by the window, looking across the garden towards the orchard, thinking of the interview that he knew was coming; and only at the opening of the door did he turn his head. Once more, as their eyes met—for he was facing her as she entered,—once more that quick delicate blush that he had learned to watch for, dyed the girl's cheeks, but it had quite faded away by the time he held her hand in his.

As he took it thus, Madam it was who said, "Captain Calverley wished to bid you farewell; he is, in truth, to leave this afternoon."

"Is that indeed so?" questioned Geraldine, finding her voice at length, and lifting her eyes to his—faintly troubled eyes they were, too; but Madam was looking on—Pen, who was so quick at imagining things, was standing by; so she hastened to add, after that slight, almost unnoticeable pause, "Endicot will miss you, and all the life and stir you have brought it. Do you go straight to Gayfield?"

All the time she was speaking Ralph watched her narrowly—so narrowly, that that, perhaps, had more to do with her calm, unmoved voice, than either Madam's or Pen's presence. But it was not his intention to be cruel, though to her it seemed a little like it at the time; he was only pausing—considering what it were well to do. But that glimpse of the trouble in her sweet eyes, the lowered tones of the soft voice, decided him.

"Mistress Hawthorne," he said, gently, "I would fain walk once more through the garden. It may be long years or ever I see it again. Have I your per-

mission"—turning to much astonished Madam,—“to accompany your daughter?”

What could Madam do but say “Yes”?—with many additional murmurs about a warm cloak. “Mine hangs in the hall, Geraldine; and wrap it well about you, for the day is chilly, although the sun shines so gaily.”

So, with a whispered word of thanks, they turned away together, leaving Madam to surmise, as best she could, what would be the end of it all.

And thus it came about that Geraldine, with her pulses beating a little quicker than usual, found herself starting on this farewell walk with the hero of so many of her girlish dreams. The time when she did not know him seemed far enough off now.

“This is Madam’s cloak,” he said, folding it well and carefully about her; “I must not let you take cold. Why!” looking round, “your hood! surely you are not thinking of venturing forth without it!”

“Can you wait whilst I go and seek it?”

“Surely.”

He had not long to wait. Very soon Geraldine returned, her fair face and bright hair contrasting well with the dark hood.

“Pretty? No; that is not the word,” was what was passing through Captain Calverley’s mind as the two stepped forth together into the bright sunshine—“she is beautiful.” And another thought was there, faint as an echo, which whispered, “She is strong, in her own girlish fashion; she will help, not hinder me, in my work.”

They walked once down the narrow sunlit path that lay outside the windows of the house, but on

passing the room of her old father, Geraldine was touched with compunction. Till that moment she had forgotten him—forgotten the promise she had made such a short time ago,—and she paused in evident trouble.

“Pray let us go some other way,” she said, almost pleadingly. “He is there,—ill. It is my father’s room,” in detached sentences. “It seems so selfish to be out enjoying myself, whilst——”

She added no more; but he seemed to understand, for he said, “We will go to the orchard. Yes,” as she hesitated; “I wish to speak to you alone.”

They turned away in silence then, past the warm sunny corner, where the white delicate namesake of the tall lovely girl was already putting forth a small bud,—away from the garden, with all its sweet rank luxuriance of herbs and flowers,—across the narrow road, till, in silence, they at length reached the orchard. But they had not gone many steps beneath the sheltering trees before Captain Calverley broke it.

“Mistress Hawthorne,” he said, more gently than she had ever heard him speak, “do you know wherefore I have brought you down here? I have brought you to ask if you will become my wife.” He did not speak hesitatingly; there was none of the faltering that had marked Phil’s tones,—rather a bold expectancy that but one answer was possible to his question. Indeed, for a second he scarcely seemed to need an answer, as he took the two white hands in his and looked down into the up-lifted eyes, which seemed trying to comprehend the turning-point arrived at.

But when he said, “Yes or no?” softly; “I must

have a reply," she shrank a little away from him, and the small head drooped, as if in sudden fear. But as he stooped his head for her answer, he caught the whispered "Yes," which was the only word it seemed her lips would frame.

"You must say something more," he went on tenderly, drawing her closer to him. "Look up," and she obeyed, raising two shy grey eyes to his. "You do not fear me?"

"No;" but it was rather a tremulous "No."

"You do; but I cannot permit that. Let there be one in this world by whom I am not dreaded or admired, but purely and simply loved." He spoke the words passionately, and Geraldine drew a step nearer. "You remember," he went on, "how you yourself told me, only a few days ago, that you comprehended how lonely I must of necessity be. Well, knowing that, can you continue to set me afar off, when it is love—your love—I want?" He spoke so earnestly that Geraldine could not but believe him. "It is perhaps because I am so much older," he said, pushing back her hood and laying his hand on her soft hair, the while he gazed down into her eyes,—“years older than you. Why, I can scarce recall when I was nineteen! All the same, at this minute everything in life seems worthless to me compared with your love.”

"But I *do* love you," she replied softly, laying her hand on his. "It seems to me I have loved you ever since I can remember."

"Ah," he cried impatiently, "but that is not what I want! I want you to forget that I am the captain of Calverley's Horse—forget that I am one of the victors

of Lexington,—and love me just only for the sake of being Ralph Calverley!”

“I do,” she said, for a second laying her soft cheek against the hand that rested on her shoulder; “I do in truth.”

“And therefore the love is changeless; for, whatever may arise in the future——”

Finishing his sentence for him, “You can never cease to be Ralph Calverley,” her voice sinking a little over the last words.

“Then I can face the future,” he said gravely, “whatever it may hold in store for me. But see,” moving a step away from her side, “there is my servant riding down the road; I must stay him, and learn what he wants.”

Geraldine stood, with clasped hands, watching him as he hastened away. She noted how the features at once resumed their habitual calm business-like expression as he listened to the man, and for a minute a feeling of awe overshadowed her at the thought of the change that had come over her, and of the way her life was about to be altered by this man, whom a month ago she had never seen. All the dreaming years were over now. Would she ever live to regret those past days, we may wonder. And she had awakened in a world of new and strange realities,—painful realities, too, for Captain Calverley is back by her side, telling her that important news has come from Boston, and that he must start thither at once. “I have sent Dick round for my horse, as I shall ride to the inn, where I expect to meet Honeywood. No time for me to go and bid farewell to Cousin Miriam, or—what I would fain have done—

pay a visit to Mr. Hawthorne. But it cannot be helped," with a half smile; "you are training for a soldier's bride already. You will have to tell your mother our story, and I will write. What tears! Then you *are* truly sorry for me to quit you? Is it indeed so?" putting his arm about her. "Ah, sweet Mistress Hawthorne! it is but a rough wooing, and a hasty one into the bargain. But," softly kissing away the tears as he spoke, "you must not cry. As soon as I can, I will return to seek you; meanwhile you will wait in patience."

Her hood had fallen back, and the bright head rested against his breast, as he held her closely to him.

"Good-bye, dear love," he whispered. "I may not linger; but do not, I pray of you, forget me. The thought of your love will cheer me often when other things go wrong; and soon, very soon, you shall see me again. Now, before I go, just kiss me once, and so bid me farewell."

She raised her head obediently and kissed him once, with a tender loving kiss, her sweet eyes swimming in tears the while.

"Say my name once more," he said; "I like to hear you say it."

"God guard you, Ralph," she whispered; then, "God keep you till we meet again."

Afterwards, one more quick farewell, and he was gone, and Geraldine Hawthorne found herself alone under the apple-boughs, marvelling whether this were not only one of the many dreams of long ago. But no; those warm kisses still on her lips, that voice

whispering its farewells, were alike too real to admit of doubts. She had awoke in the world that lies on the other side of childhood, at last.

CHAPTER IX.

"LITTLE BEES HAVE BITTER STINGS."

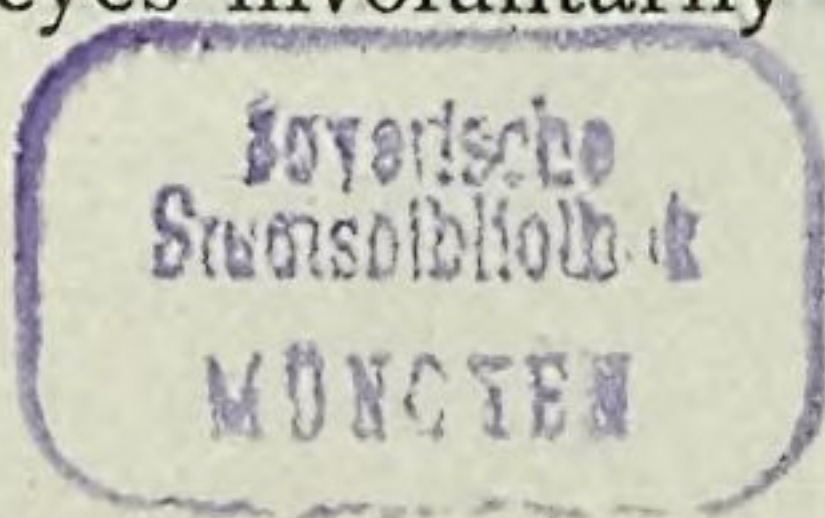
"I love you for the sake of what you are,
And not of what you do."

THE sun had set, the day's work was over—Geraldine free to seek her sewing, and with it in her hands, dream, if she so willed, of the lover from whom she had parted only yesterday—the lover whose wooing had of necessity been so brief.

It had been somewhat a trying day. The old father had been even more difficult to please than usual; he was ill, Madam thought—feeling the reaction consequent on the excitement that had preceded this return to the old way of life; besides which, Geraldine's news had upset him. He was scarcely pleased, and yet had no tangible objection to make. Even Madam's questions and constant allusions to the subject Geraldine had found a little trying; for, after all, she had but so little to say. So that it may fairly be questioned whether this first day of her engagement could have been called a happy one.

But now at length she was at peace, and quite alone, as chance would have it, for Madam was with her husband. And Pen—"ah, where was Pen?" Geraldine lifted her eyes involuntarily at the thought;

Geraldine Hawthorne.



but her knowledge of the day of the month was no clue to her, or she might have suspected whither Pen's footsteps were at the present moment leading her.

The old orchard was fated to hear another love-story to-night. Down amongst its dusky shadows Josiah Sumner was waiting for Pen's answer to his question, before following Captain Calverley to Boston.

"Would she come?" he was wondering, as he had wondered for a long time now. It was eight o'clock; soon the moon would be rising. He would give her just another quarter of an hour, and if she had not arrived by then, he would throw it up, *for the present*,—this was his mental reservation. Go to Gayfield, and if all went well, return in a year, to hear what she might have to say then. "For, after all, she is so young. I must give her time." So ran the current of his thoughts. For Josiah Sumner was not a man who could set his mind on a thing to-day, and draw back again, and choose something else to-morrow, because his first choice was at first denied him. No; patience, patience, was his motto,—and "patience," we know, "is genius."

At length it came to pass that, lifting up his eyes to try and discern the time by the large watch he still held in his hand, he saw that it was an hour since the time at which Pen had promised to meet him—an hour and a half since he had first taken up his stand amongst the deepening shadows. After the first pang of disappointment, when his only thought was to leave the place at once, he began to marvel if by chance anything could have prevented Pen's appearance. Madam was very strict with the girls, keeping them,

as a rule, hard at work on one household matter or another, and then it was impossible to tell for certain how much care and attention the old man might require. There were days when it was necessary for some one to be always with him—and who could tell, Madam and Geraldine might be busy, and thus it might have fallen to Pen's lot to sit with him. So, thinking all the while, Josiah Sumner was making his way, with slow footsteps, through the orchard towards the farm.

He went as if unwillingly, for he was averse to going there without Pen's knowledge, after telling her he would stay away; but "circumstances alter cases," honest-minded Josiah Sumner was driven to argue in self-defence. Pen had broken her part of the bargain, and if she had done it with intention, he would soon learn it from her manner of meeting him, and, at the least, he should have the satisfaction, poor as it was, of bidding her farewell, even if the others were by, before starting for Gayfield, which he must do on the morrow. And so thinking, he passed through the garden, and entered the kitchen, which he found quite deserted, to see if he could catch a glimpse of any of the family.

The sound of voices, raised as if in dispute, at length attracted his attention, and he took a few steps down the passage that led to old Mr. Hawthorne's room. As he drew nearer he became aware that the door was open, and gradually the sounds shaped themselves into the voice whose echoes were haunting him. Yes, Pen's voice of a certainty, but choked as if with tears.

I was about to do no harm. I was only——"

And then the shrill angry notes of her grandfather's old voice, vibrating with such passion as Josiah Sumner had never heard in all the years that he had known him.

"Hear me, and do not dare to interrupt! I do not believe you. You were stealing out for some ill purpose; to meet some lover, I dare vouch—some lover, who you hope is going to overlook your namelessness, and for the sake of a pair of bright eyes, be willing to offer you his own honest name."

Here there was a slight pause, and Geraldine's voice, grave and quiet, was heard as if in pleading; but far above it, the torrent swept on unheeding.

"But it is not so. My advice is honest, whatever his words may be. Heed him not. Bide at home, as an honest woman should." But breaking off of a sudden—"Honest woman, indeed! What am I dreaming of? It were better I did not mind you, but let you go after your mother at once. It is in the blood. I have watched you, and seen it coming out, day by day. Your mother"—his voice rising to an angry, impotent cry—"was——"

But he got no further. Before Geraldine had time to throw her arm about the other girl's shrinking, terrified form—before Madam's quick exclamation could make itself heard even, in defence—a man's figure crossed the threshold and stood by her side, a man's strong hand took the small tear-stained fingers in his, and Josiah Sumner's voice, whispering courage and hope, sounded in her ear.

Mr. Hawthorne paused perforce, and sank back as if exhausted on his pillows. Then Josiah's voice, quiet and steady, took the place of his. His calm

grave tones seemed to cut through the shrill angry notes of the old man, and of necessity silence him.

"You are mistaken, sir. Pen came down to meet me in the orchard, there to tell me she would become my wife."

There was no answer to his words; perhaps there was none needed.

Old Mr. Hawthorne had sunk back, panting and wearied, on his couch. Geraldine was bending over him, and Madam, with a sign of her hand, seemed to bid them begone. They did not linger, but together made their way towards the empty kitchen. Even when there, and alone, Josiah did not say much. Holding the small hands in his—

"I think, even if you were not yet quite decided, Pen, I did well. For the present, at least, I think we will let the words stand. What do you say?"

But the girl only lifted her tearful eyes, and clung tighter to him. And then—

"I never knew"—a scarlet flame in her cheeks—"never heard about her—my mother—before? Did you?"

"Yes," gently; "I always knew."

"And you care to make me your wife?" humbly and softly.

"Yes, more than I ever cared before."

"Ah, Jos, I never even guessed till to-night how good you were! Now——" She hesitated.

"Well?" he questioned.

"Ah, now I know that I love you."

Madam coming in, by-and-by, found them sitting together in the glow of the dying fire, and with an affectionate softness, rare in her, laid a hand for a

moment on Josiah's shoulder, and one on the girl's head.

"Your grandfather is tired to-night," she said, "and feeling ill; you must not heed his sharp speeches."

Geraldine also coming in, tall and grave, across the bars of moonlight that lay on the floor, to seek for something for her father, moved to their side, and kissed Pen tenderly.

"Pen is good and true," she said to Josiah, "and deserves the good man's love she has won."

They were all trying to blot out of her sore young heart those bitter words she had listened to anon.

"She has been a good sister to me, so small doubt that 'good sisters, good wives,' will be the tale that you will have to tell."

"He is a true lover," Geraldine said that night, as the two girls went up-stairs together. "I think, dear Pen, you will be very happy. You think so, do you not?"

"Yes," and Pen smiled. "He is all *I* need; but I feared, Di, *you* would esteem him too little of a hero to be interesting."

"Ah no," Geraldine answered hastily, kissing her as she spoke; then without another word departed, and having locked herself into her own room, paced slowly over to the window, a grave expression on her face. And the thought at her heart was, that had Ralph Calverley himself stood that night in Josiah Sumner's place, she would not have asked that he should act differently.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE THE CONSOLER.

“Life, struck sharp on death,
Makes awful lightning.”

A WEEK had passed away, and in noisy turbulent Gayfield Captain Calverley was standing in his own small room, reading a letter that had just been put into his hand. It read something like a cry of pain, so short and sorrowful it was—

“He is dead, my dear father! I can write nothing else to-day, for it is my one thought, and even your love comes second. I do not ask you to come, knowing well you would do so, were it possible, to comfort as much as might be, your sorrowful

GERALDINE HAWTHORNE.”

The time was not an easy one: every day the work was growing harder, and it required now the full strength of manhood to swim with the tide, and Ralph Calverley was not one even to rest content with that. The race which he ran must find him sole victor, nevertheless he sat for fully an hour, Geraldine's letter by his side, considering what it were well for her to do. And the result of that hour's thought was—that a fortnight later Geraldine stood in the dim twilight in a small room of the house in which she had passed the greater part of her life, with a consciousness, as yet vague and indistinct, that

on the morrow she was to leave Endicot for the first time in all the nineteen years of her life.

And if the thread of gold in her present trouble was the knowledge that she was so shortly to see her lover, it was not her most prominent thought to-day, as she moved about with an aching heart in the midst of the household gods she had loved so long. Only a fortnight ago the old man whose absence she deplored this day, had reposed on those cushions on which her hands now rested—only a fortnight ago! And yet not one tear could she shed, she felt so hard and cold, as she stood by tearful Pen; even Madam had broken down when she returned from the funeral to the empty, desolate house. “And I,” Geraldine thought, “I, whom he loved so dearly, I have not one tear for his memory. Is it true of me, then, that I have no feeling?”

And so, whilst Madam and Pen sat in the sunny kitchen talking over the morrow’s journey, Geraldine stole into the little empty room to think over the past, and hold some still communion with it. The twilight shadows deepened and increased around her, and still she remained on, a quiet, thoughtful figure, with hands lightly clasped about her knees. “And I was in truth so dear to him,” she said at length, rising slowly; “he was ever a good kind father to me, and was never happy if I was long out of his sight.”

In rising, a sheet of paper lying on the table, with a slight rustle, fell to her feet. Mechanically she stooped and picked it up, and in so doing, recognised her own handwriting. Even by this dim light she saw it was that last poem that he had begun, of which she had copied these few first verses. She read them

tenderly, her eyes softening, her lips parted; then crossing the room to the oaken press, and taking down the portfolio, she opened it on the table, and glanced at one page after another amongst the bundles of unfinished attempts. "His life's work." The words seemed ringing in her ears. Gradually, as she looked, the writing grew dim before her eyes, and at length she fell on her knees, the tears raining thick and fast upon the floor.

Death is sad—life is sad; but surely sadder than anything is it to know that the door is shut, and the work for which there was given time and talent left undone!

Captain Calverley's plan was that Jonathan and Miriam Sweetapple, who were going to Gayfield, should take Geraldine and her mother with them, and that they should be married at once, inasmuch as it seemed unlikely that he could get away at present from his many duties. This plan had had to be modified, and it had now finally been decided that Geraldine should go with the Sweetapples at once; that Madam and Pen should remain a month to settle various matters about the farm; and that then, if there were still no prospect of Captain Calverley being able to come down to Endicot, Madam should follow with Pen to Gayfield, and that both girls should be married there. Though the wherefore for all this hurry, Madam could not comprehend.

"Leave well alone," was her advice. When the war was over, there would be time to think of other things; then would be the time for gay doings.

In the meantime, Captain Calverley was masterful

and decided, and did not seem to expect or understand that there were two sides to a question, of which he saw but one; and Geraldine not being the girl to see the other side either, it had been settled as nearly as possible as he wished.

So it came to pass that Geraldine Hawthorne on the 24th of July bade farewell to Endicot with shy wet eyes, kissing Pen and her mother in a strange passionate fashion, most unlike her usual calm mode of doing everything—a strangeness which moved Madam, looking also unlike herself, in her prim's widow's cap, not a little.

“Good-bye, dear mother,” she cried, with her arms clasped tight about Madam's neck, “you will send for me at once, will you not, if you need me? Would that I had been a greater help to you! but you will forget all, will you not, saving that I am your loving daughter?”

“You have ever been a good daughter, Geraldine—saving for the carelessness which is but natural, perhaps, in youth—to me and him that is gone, and God will remember it;” and Madam wiped a tear away.

Then with a kiss from Pen, Geraldine found herself by Cousin Miriam's side in their carriage; for the Sweetapples were old-fashioned people, and did not travel in the stage, but comfortably and easily in their own carriage.

From that day forward, Geraldine stepped into life in earnest—life so different from that she had known, that what had been hitherto might have passed for a dream, this for the reality. Jonathan owned a house in Gayfield, and there they were

quickly established, with Captain Calverley and Philip Honeywood as constant visitors, to keep them up to the march of events; and although the gentle Friends spoke regretfully of the war, yet they acknowledged, in deeds if not in words, the sad necessity that had urged it on. To Philip Honeywood's tales, Cousin Miriam would listen, even though her soft voice would rise in rebuke now and again; for he remained still her friend, and in her inmost heart she could not comprehend Geraldine's choice.

And Geraldine herself? The colour crept back to her cheeks, the elasticity to her step, as the days passed in the sunshine of her lover's presence; and noting this, Miriam was fain to rejoice. Every day, as soon as he could throw off his cares and worries for an hour, Ralph Calverley would make his way to the house in Church Street. There, without needing to glance up, he was aware that in the window that looked down on to the street, sat a quiet figure, diligently at work, awaiting his arrival. Tired and careworn, he would mount the stairs and seek her side, to listen to the sweet voice, with its echoes of love and pride. Here there were no doubts—no questions as to whether indeed he was so worthy as some declared—no attempts to read his actions by the light of an enemy's lamp. There he might be himself, and yet be certain of seeing the proud gleam in the serene grey eyes, hear the proud ring in the low voice. And so it came to pass that he realised as the days went by how much of his love, his life indeed, he was staking on this throw.

"Geraldine," he said, leaning towards her as they sat alone in the twilight—for both Jonathan and

Miriam had left the room—as this thought rose new and strong within him; “Geraldine,” and then paused.

The question in his voice, and the sudden pause following it, made Geraldine look up anxiously. But he added nothing more at once; instead rose, and paced the length of the room, and then returning to her side, placed his hands on her shoulders, looking down the while into the beautiful face upraised to his. Then after a moment’s hesitation he said, but less seriously than he had spoken before, “Ah, what should I do were I to lose your esteem? For it is sweet, you know, to hear my praises sung by you.”

“Lose my esteem?” she repeated; “that is not likely, is it? You forget you were my hero before ever I saw you.”

“But if I were no longer a hero?” he urged, stooping his head lower still, and seeming as if wishful to read into her very soul. “If I were to fall right down from the heights to which I have climbed, perhaps by no fault of my own, what then?”

“You would have my love,” she made answer, very low, awed into something like solemnity by his voice. “My love, that would follow you down into the depths, as now it essays to follow you into the heights.”

And having so said, she threw her arms passionately about his neck and kissed him; then, as if frightened, shrank back ashamed. But he took her in his arms, and held her closely to him.

“You are my good angel,” he cried. “You must never leave me—swear it. With you by my side, I am safe.”

“Safe from what?” she questioned, gravely.

"Safe from all manner of evil—all manner of temptations."

"Ah, Ralph, do not trust to *me* for that," she said tenderly, laying her hand on his, "or you will find that when the time comes——"

But he interrupted her almost impatiently. "I must go—I cannot stay another moment now;" and the lines of thought appeared on his brow that this hour of calm had served to chase away. "I almost doubt," with a harassed smile, "if it is not easier to obey than to command."

"Of course it is," Geraldine assented, gently. "But then it is for those few who can command to sacrifice themselves for the many who can only obey."

"Is it love," he questioned softly, as he raised her face to his for his farewell kiss—"is it love, my sweet Mistress Hawthorne, that teaches you what to say to soothe me?"

"Love and pride," she answered.

But these glimpses of peace came but as brief interludes in Ralph Calverley's busy life, though so brief and sweet were they that he sometimes found himself unconsciously wondering whether the struggle outside, and that haven for which he looked, was ever likely to repay him what it was costing him—the nights and days of thought and toil that were sowing the grey hairs so thickly, that Geraldine fancied she could almost see them growing.

"When I have won," he thought, "then I will rest. In the meantime——" In the meantime he was the popular idol of the hour; and Geraldine behind her curtains would watch the tall figure passing up and down the street, would note the glances and pointing

fingers which proclaimed his name to the passers-by. And the faint reflection of his glory which clung about her would bring the colour to her cheeks and the tears to her eyes. She had not as yet had an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Honeywood alone, since her arrival in Gayfield. Not that she had avoided him, but it had not so happened that they had ever met alone. He rarely came to the house, except for an hour after supper, when he invariably talked to Miriam, whilst Geraldine worked apart or played backgammon with Jonathan; so that a "Good evening" on his entrance or departure, or a bow from him when they met in the street, was the only sign of recognition that had passed between them. It was better so, Mr. Honeywood thought, for the present; and he strove, in his loyal manly fashion, to rejoice, as he noted the roundness returning to her cheek, and an occasional smile to her lips, albeit it was owing to the love and care of another. But he did rejoice, and came and watched over her from afar in a manner she little guessed at, and loved gentle Miriam and queer Cousin Jonathan for her sake: Miriam in some way also for her own.

The first time that Geraldine recalled his breaking through the slight barrier that had risen up between them, was one evening when Cousin Jonathan had cried off from his usual game, and instead was reading his paper; and she therefore, not being required, had lifted the curtain, and was standing looking down into the almost deserted street; and as she stood thus her mind flitted away to the old farm at Endicot, and of how lovely the orchard looked on a moonlight night, when the apple-blossoms shone like silver; and

from that her thoughts rambled on to her namesake growing in its sheltered corner, and her father who had so cared for it—and at the thought of the old man, splash fell a great tear on to her black dress. The sight of the tear roused her from her reverie, and hastily she lifted her hand to her eyes, to discover, to her surprise, that they were wet; and as she did so, she became aware that Mr. Honeywood was standing by her side. He pushed away the curtain and stood beside her for a moment, also looking down into the street in silence. Something in his attitude recalled that evening of the birthday-dance, and she shrank a step backwards. Her thoughts seemed to be read by him, for, as if she had spoken, he said: "You know you made me a promise you would always be my friend. I fear the sight of this lovely night has recalled your sorrow," just touching her black dress as he spoke. "I have often wished to tell you I grieved much when I heard it, but have scarce dared to approach the subject."

"He was such a tender father," she answered low, almost marvelling at herself for mentioning her grief, which she did not recall having done since leaving her home; but there was something in the sympathising eyes and voice of Philip Honeywood that seemed to unlock her heart.

"And he had a tender daughter also, Mistress Hawthorne."

"Ah, but I might have been gentler," she answered regretfully, raising her eyes to his. "He was always ill, and I always so well and strong, that there was no excuse for me."

"You must not grieve for that," he replied gently.

"Even doing one's duty imperfectly teaches us somewhat. Perhaps you have only begun the lesson as a daughter, and will perfect it as a wife."

"Thank you," she said humbly, "I will strive to remember what you say; it is a good thought."

When the door had closed on their visitor, Miriam beckoned the girl towards her. She did not speak for a moment, only drew her down on to the stool at her feet, and passed her hand caressingly over the bright hair, and then, "Thou must not forget," she said softly, "that sympathy helps us on our journey. If we can but learn to open our hearts it eases them. It does not do to shut ourselves up alone with grief, or he becomes a master instead of a helpful servant." And as Geraldine looked up inquiringly,—*"It is the old tale of the peas in the pilgrim's shoes; sympathy boils them. No, I am not going to bid thee do hard things. I love thee too well to be severe, only some day thou must come and shed thy tears with thy arms about my neck,—not alone and afar off. There. Now let us speak of something else. It is as I told thee long ago, thou hast chosen the wrong one! I thought that would make thee lift thy head, and a smile has come at once—a smile which says quite clear,—‘Ay, prate away as thou wilt, foolish old woman! I KNOW.’ That is youth's triumph over age. As if we have never known too! Now,"* stroking the girl's soft hands, "now let me tell my tale. Some one, we will not say who,—let us suppose it to be Jonathan,—some one is so much esteemed by his——by those who serve him, that they, being wishful to give him something in token of their esteem, have decreed that something shall be a sword—as if there were not enough of

warlike weapons spread abroad on the earth! And some one else, who is so fond of old Miriam that he would delight to give her a pleasure,—so fond of her,” with a swift gleam of amusement, “that he can scarcely bear to pass a day without seeing her,—has asked if she, and any one else she cares for, would like to see the show.”

“Ah, Cousin Miriam,” said the girl, lifting her head from the old woman’s lap, “notwithstanding all the sorrow death brings, it is a happy world.”

“It is not death, dear Geraldine, that is answerable for all the sorrow. Sometimes that is the lesser grief,” Cousin Miriam said, as she kissed her good-night.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR A SWORD'S SAKE.

“I do not praise this man: the man was flawed.”

THE spot selected for the spectacle to which cousin Miriam had been invited, was a small square in front of the buildings that were used as barracks; and it was from the window of Mr. Honeywood’s room that Geraldine and her friend looked down on to the scene below. To Geraldine it was one of the proudest moments of her life, and even quiet Miriam was stirred into momentary enthusiasm. The evening was calm and still. The sun had set, but there was a glow over the town still, and in the tender yellow flush the little group assembled in the open space stood out clear and distinct. Ralph Calverley, a tall

black figure, in his plain dark uniform; Philip Honeywood, slighter, fairer, standing by his side, and about the door of the barracks as many of the regiment as were not on duty elsewhere,—for the times were busy, and it was not a great number of the men that were ever idle; and in the background a small crowd, that the sight of the soldiers had drawn together—a small crowd, for there had been no talk of what was to be the conclusion of the day's work.

It fell to Philip Honeywood's lot to say the few words with which the sword was presented. A few words that came readily from his heart and lips, of love, admiration, respect, and pride, and they rose clearly enough through the still air to the ears of the girl leaning over the slight wooden balcony above.

Then Ralph Calverley took the sword in his hands. It was a plain good steel, as beseemed his profession and way of life, and had engraved across it "From friends,"—and then below, as a sort of motto, "fight for us."

He drew it from its scabbard and held it aloft a moment, where it caught and flashed back the last glimmer of daylight—seemed, indeed, to hold it; for it was at that moment Geraldine became aware that twilight was creeping on apace, and that the figures below were growing dim and indistinct. And it was at that moment, also, she became aware of a vague black shadow that slowly but surely was making its way through the crowd to where the tall figure stood with the sword in its hand. Instinctively Geraldine watched it; the gathering dusk seemed to mingle and become part of its black cloak, that it held so closely

wrapped about it. Its object was apparently so uncertain, so undecided, that to follow its movements was fraught with a certain amount of interest. An arm was lifted to clutch closer yet an end of the shrouding cloak, and with the quick movement there came a gleam—a gleam like summer lightning, Geraldine fancied, and smiled at the fancy,—and it was then that, lifting her head, she noticed how dark it was growing, and that Ralph Calverley was standing with the sword in his hand, on which was playing just the same sort of weird light as—— Her eyes once more sought out the strange figure. It had disappeared. No; there it was, standing by Philip Honeywood's side, still and sombre, listening, of course, for the words that were to acknowledge the gift. Then—which came first?—a gleam, swift in truth as summer lightning, a shrill, terrified scream from a woman's voice, or an uplifted arm which received, and so turned aside, the assassin's dagger from the heart of the man beside him? Then it was all over, and the shrouded figure was struggling in the arms of two stout soldiers, and cries were startling the quiet echoes of the summer night—cries for vengeance. “String him up to the nearest post!” “Shoot him down!” “Murderer!” “Assassin!” “Spy!” So waged the war of words round the soldiers and their victim: it was all they could do to guard him from the rough and ready vengeance of the mob. But a way was made at that moment through the surging crowd, that was growing larger every moment, for the tall figure of a woman, with wide terrified eyes and panting breath, and bright hair that showed light against the black street and black robe she wore—a woman who forced her way

to where Captain Calverley still stood, with Philip Honeywood leaning against him.

"Make way, there!" he cried; "Mr. Honeywood is wounded with the dagger that should have done for me," and then, in turning, came face to face with Geraldine.

"Are you hurt?" she cried, unheeding of the crowd and of Philip Honeywood's white face—of everything but their two selves, and the danger she had seen threaten him, and then glance aside. "Are you sure?" leaning closer yet, and laying her trembling hands on his arm.

"Yes," he replied, "quite sure," putting one arm round her to steady her. "See, you should not think of me. Here is poor Honeywood has got what I ought to have had."

"No, no," she said, shuddering, and still holding her hands about his arm; and then, as if casting off a painful dream with an effort, and turning towards Philip Honeywood, "*I do* care—only——" lifting her face to his, and the wet, saddened eyes said the rest.

"It was better," he said; but he spoke in a dull mechanical voice, and Captain Calverley, feeling him leaning more heavily against him, had only time to free himself from Geraldine's hold, ere he became aware that Philip Honeywood had fainted.

They carried him through the crowd up to his own room, where poor Cousin Miriam was still trembling and praying alone in the darkness, and in a few minutes he came to himself, to find Miriam examining his arm.

"Do not speak," she said gently. "I am not altogether helpless, and can bind it up for thee. 'Tis but

a flesh-wound, and will heal shortly enough, so that thou art good and obedient."

"Yes, I turned it aside; but the blow was well aimed," and then paused. "Do I see Mistress Hawthorne?"

"Ah, yes," she said, sinking on her knees beside him. "You will not consider me cruel, will you? I did not think of you," she stammered, reddening as she spoke; "I can say naught to excuse myself. Everything sounds so heartless, when, in truth," gently touching the hand that Miriam was binding up, "I shall ever love this hand that has saved me his life."

"The hand is well rewarded, Mistress. But hark, what are they saying below there, Ralph?"

Captain Calverley, however, was standing on the balcony, whence Geraldine had watched the assassin strive to play his part, and did not hear. But it was his, Ralph Calverley's name that was being shouted by the surging mob below, which had grown to a good size now—Ralph Calverley's name, with every epithet that admiration and the momentary enthusiasm of the crowd could think of, mingled with cries of hatred, cries for vengeance on the wretched prisoner now in the guard-room below. "Give him to us," they shouted, "and we will teach him how we treat assassins! Spies! English spy!" The word was bandied about from mouth to mouth, and was like oil on flame.

"That is the way the English fight," came from a bold eager voice in the middle of the throng. "Need we fear them? an army that hires out assassins to prowl about and stab in the dark? Ah," with a disdainful laugh, "turn him out," say I; "send him back

to the British, from whom he came, and I guess he will be in no hurry to come back here again."

"You are right, Jabez Mather," spoke a grave voice overhead—the voice of Ralph Calverley—"quite right; we are men, and we do not war with cut-throats and assassins. We shoot them down, because they impede our steps, but over their dead bodies we will march on to do grander deeds than the world has yet dreamt of! Why do we hesitate? *We* hesitate, I say—but I mean you. *I* do not ask for a day, or an hour. I say," suddenly raising his voice, "follow me and I will lead you to victory—to freedom! We will teach these English, who have their spies in every place, what is ours—our birthright, our inheritance; teach them that Americans are their equals—nay, their conquerors, through right; that quick as the arm was raised that stood between yon dagger and my heart, strong as the love that gave me my life below there, is the love we bear each other and our country. Countrymen, be strong, be united, and follow me!"

He had seized the moment. The populace, roused to something like frenzy by the attempted murder, his, their idol, in their very midst, with all his friends about him, shouted and cheered till, had he signalled to lead them then and there to the very stronghold of their enemy, they would have followed him, one and all. The iron was hot, and he understood how to strike. None knew also, better than he, how soon it cools. But for the moment he felt as if he were nearing the pinnacle, as his name was bandied from one to another, as cheer after cheer was given for him, and then "Mistress Hawthorne," cried a voice; and the cry was taken up by one and another, till

Ralph Calverley was fain to bring her out by his side. The lighted room behind threw the two figures into strong relief as they stood thus together,—she, with her arms locked in his, her lovely grey eyes fixed with pride and love on his face, and he, grave, and dark, and stern as ever.

“Good luck go with you both!” shouted a voice from below.

“We thank you,” Captain Calverley answered; “though good luck, it is said, is quick to come and quick to go!”

“But love bides on for ever,” murmured Geraldine, very low; but he heard, and repeated her words aloud.

“But love bides on for ever.” And then bending over, and gazing down on the moving throng, amongst which now shone here and there many a lantern, illumining earnest faces—“I think, friends, I never expressed my thanks for the sword you gave me this evening. Other things put thanks out of my head. But now Mistress Hawthorne will buckle it on, which will surely bring it good fortune; and instead of thanking you for it, I will use it, and where it points you will follow—for, rest assured, it points to victory.”

He placed the sword in Geraldine's hands, amid the shouts of the people, and guided her still trembling fingers to fasten it on, and then, her hand in his, he listened to the cheers “for Mistress Hawthorne” and for Captain Ralph Calverley, and with the enthusiasm still at its height, turned within and closed the window. All was still and quiet there, Miriam seated by the bed, and Philip Honeywood resting with his eyes shut, for he felt weak and shaken.

"I will take you into my own little writing-room," Captain Calverley said to Miriam, "and you and Geraldine can wait till the streets are quieter, when I will myself take you home. In the meantime, let me thank you for your care of the invalid. He will go to bed and rest now, and to-morrow he will, I trust, be better. Is it not so, Phil? But no, we will not disturb him to answer, he is drowsy and heavy. To-morrow he will be grateful to you."

Later on, that same night, as Captain Calverley walked back from Church Street to pass the night in an arm-chair in his friend's room, he muttered, as he paced the deserted streets under the bright starlight skies, "So nearly won! Had it but occurred anywhere but here, I believe verily that even George Washington might have had an opponent to fear in me; but," impatiently, "who cares what Gayfield thinks?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD.

"I love thee, I love but thee,
With a love that shall not die,
Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold."

Bedouin Song.

THAT summer evening seemed the beginning of a new era; Captain Calverley's words appeared to have been the spark applied to the tow. After that, nothing

was spoken of in Gayfield but the war; and the little town assumed a martial aspect, and no longer did aught but question how soon the enemy might be sought out openly and defied.

Captain Calverley's tall, dark, plainly dressed figure was greeted with cheers and cries whenever he appeared, and a small crowd would gather every morning at Judge Sweetapple's door to watch his entry, and await tidings of how his friend fared. For the morning after he had received his wound, Cousin Miriam had insisted on his being brought to her house, where, as she said, she should know he was well cared for. And since then she had been rendered comparatively happy by being able to watch him herself, cook his food, see he took it, and soothe him with her gentle motherly ways when he was feverish and exhausted. And on Philip Honeywood this care and loving attention was not thrown away.

He was a man essentially open to gentle feminine influence, who liked being petted and made a fuss with,—a man with ready adaptability, who could always tone himself to suit his surroundings, and who therefore, whilst ill, did not tease his nurses with endlessly wishing he were well, but instead threw himself into enjoying the present as much as was possible; so with a light mind and easy temperament, was soon convalescent. The fever which had threatened the first day did not continue, and Miriam speedily had the satisfaction of seeing her invalid lying on a couch in the sitting-room by the window, where he could amuse himself watching the passers-by, and with Geraldine or herself always at hand to talk, or play chess, or attend to any of his whims.

A week had gone by in this pleasant homely fashion, when one afternoon Geraldine found herself alone with him; both Jonathan and Miriam having gone out to see a friend, and having left their guest in her charge. She was reading, seated close to the window, for it was growing dusk, and Mr. Honeywood was moving restlessly about, of which fact his nurse at last became aware. She put her book down on her knee, and looked across towards him. He had just thrown himself down on the couch, and was leaning back with closed eyes. How white and ill he looked! Geraldine's heart reproached her for not having observed it before. She rose, and quietly crossing the room, took a chair by his side.

"I am afraid," she said, gravely, "that you are overtired. You did too much this morning, perhaps."

He opened his eyes. "I fear so, Mistress Hawthorne. You see it is a long time I have been in the house, and I did not perhaps realise—— But never mind, I will rest now. You will sit beside me and talk,—that will cure my head, which aches sadly."

"And you said nothing?" she returned, reproachfully. "That was because it was only Geraldine, and not Cousin Miriam."

"Only Geraldine!" he repeated. He added nothing else, but a slight inflection in the tone of his voice brought a delicate flush into her cheeks.

"I will seek some lavender-water, and you will find it will cure the headache."

"No, you will not," he said, quietly; "you will stay here and talk. You will tell me first about Madam, and when she is coming, and Pen; and oh!" com-

prehensively, "*everything*," opening his eyes for a minute. "You will tell me all I long to know."

And Geraldine understood.

"Yes," she said softly, drawing a low stool to the side of the sofa, "you will shut your eyes and rest your head, so as to be well when Cousin Miriam returns, then I will tell you all I think will interest you." And in that grave sweet voice which always soothed Philip Honeywood, just as it used to do old Mr. Hawthorne, Geraldine told of her hopes for the future. "I long for mother," she said; "but Ralph says——" it was not often his Christian name slipped out—and she half paused and blushed.

"What does Ralph say?"

"That it is not safe for her to travel at present. Everything is in such a rough state that I must wait till he can send, or go to fetch her himself; but I long to see her. Poor mother!"

"And you"—a pause—"you will be married when she comes?"

"No," Geraldine replied; "I still trust that I shall be able to go home to be married. Perhaps the war will soon be over."

"The war will not be over yet."

There was silence for a moment, and then: "You are very happy, are you not?"

"So happy," she said, gazing dreamily out into the shadowy evening sky, "that I feel a life of gratitude would be small repayment for these last weeks."

He watched her almost anxiously, the passion in her voice startled him, she was usually so calm and grave; but he said nothing for a moment, and then

uneasily: "Have you ever heard, sweet Mistress Hawthorne, that all happiness is bought?"

"Yes," she answered, clasping her hands; "but I am not loath to pay the price."

"Our talk is growing gloomy," he said more lightly; "it is bad for an invalid; but you have done my head good, as I knew you would."

"That is indeed good news, and it is well to hear it before Cousin Miriam returns, or I should have been scolded."

"And here she comes."

"No, it is not Cousin Miriam," said Geraldine, quickly.

"Is it not? I fancied I heard a footstep."

"Yes, but——"

And then the door opened to admit Captain Calverley.

Mr. Honeywood smiled. "That was, in truth, not a good guess of mine; but in my own defence I must be permitted to say I supposed that footstep to be Cousin Jonathan's."

Unheeding of the light words flying about him, Captain Calverley crossed the room to Mr. Honeywood's side. There was that in his expression that brought the exclamation to Phil's lips, "What has happened?"

"The first step is achieved," he said, pausing, and speaking with an unusual gleam in his eyes; "I have been ordered to take the regiment to Cambridge."

Mr. Honeywood rose impetuously to his feet. "Then it is done; I believe the salvation of the country is at hand. It was no fictitious report we received, then?"

"No, Boston is besieged; and there is, I believe, small hope of its being relieved."

Then Captain Calverley came away from wars and rumours thereof, to the girlish figure standing beside him. He looked for a minute away from his friend's enthusiastic face to hers, just in time to hear the words, "When will you have to go?"

It was more as a low startled cry they escaped her than as a sentence needing a reply; and almost as soon as she had said them, she drew herself up, as with a little effort, and walked away to the window where she was used to sit and work, there to strive to steady her trembling lips, so as not to betray her lack of courage at this first call upon it. But what should she do? Alone here, as she had been alone that dreadful fortnight at Endicot; but it would be worse, ten times worse, for now she would have to live in daily and hourly dread that any day might just bring to her the news that he was dead. Dead! leaning her head against the pane, she tried to picture it. To thousands of other women, in all human probability, such direful message would be brought before the war was over. Why not to her? One morning to awake and learn it, and to know that all the long years of life were yet to come, and she only nineteen! Here her fancies were disturbed by the sound of a voice—*his* voice—repeating her name. She turned towards him, and clasped her arms about his neck, clinging tightly to him in a way she had never done before, murmuring soft words of love, with her head laid upon his breast, putting aside her usual coldness of manner in the agony of her love and fear.

"I cannot bear it," she whispered; and then with a violent effort rousing herself, and passing her hand across her eyes—"Do not be angry with me. I am

tired to-night. To-morrow, yes, to-morrow, I will be braver. But just tell me," clasping his hand in hers, "how long before?"—her lips quivering as she spoke, and the grey eyes dimming with repressed tears.

"Two days, or one,—an hour perhaps; but do not stay to weep over an idea yet. I have something to say first, and you have made it easier. For you love me, Geraldine," turning her face up to his. "Listen,—I am not a credulous man, but I believe in you as implicitly as if your heart were an open book for me to read. I am a hard man,"—speaking low and quickly,—“a cold, calculating, ambitious man of the world, and, folks will tell you, I doubt not, without the capacity to love any one but myself. But believe them not. Every bit of good I have in me, I verily believe, is moulded into love for you. For I *do* love you; never doubt it. And on the strength of that love you must become my wife. I will risk no chances; you must be mine! It will lighten the pain of our parting,—it will be sweeter for me to remember you as my wife; and if I fall,”—there was no quiver in his own tones, but he felt the girl shudder that leant against him, and he paused,—“You will promise?” leaning down.

There was no answer; he lifted up the face and looked into the grey eyes for his reply. There was no blush, no maidenly tremor,—only calm resolve on the sweet, grave face. He looked at her thus a moment, and then—“You do not flinch,” he said low, and it was *his* heart that at the moment beat the quicker of the two.

“Flinch!” she repeated; “it is not from that which binds me closer to you that I would flinch.”

"Then I will reward your trust." That was all he said. "I will find Cousin Miriam at once," were his next words; and lifting the curtain he went back into the room, but Geraldine did not reappear till the voices ceased, and Philip Honeywood called "Mistress Hawthorne."

She came back then shyly to his couch, more of a blushing conscious girl than when she had stood by Captain Calverley's side.

Philip looked flushed and excited, and that recalled Geraldine to a sense of her duties.

"You have been talking too much," she said. "Ah, would that Cousin Miriam would return! for then, I know, you would be sent to bed."

"Not yet awhile," he pleaded; "though most things I would do for the sake of Mistress Geraldine Hawthorne. But tell me first——"

"No, I will tell you nought; not to-night, that is——maybe to-morrow——"

"To-morrow, indeed!" cried Miriam's voice. "And what does all this mean? Unless a night's rest does the work of two, *bed* will be the place for Mr. Philip Honeywood to-morrow. Ah, Geraldine! dost thou call this being a good nurse?"

"'Tis not Mistress Geraldine's fault; 'tis all the fault of Captain Calverley, who has been in here agitating us both. Is it not true?" with a comical glance at Geraldine. "But here he is back again; so I will depart, leaving him to agitate you and Cousin Jonathan. Farewell."

And when Miriam turned round in her surprise to question Geraldine, she found that she also had made

good her escape. So there was nothing for it but to sit down and listen to Captain Calverley's story.

And whilst she was listening to it, and striving to attune her mind to the decision of what was best, Geraldine up-stairs, instead of sleeping, was burning the midnight oil, with a sheet of paper before her, striving, with an unaccustomed pen, to acquaint her mother with the promise she had given, and to prove, as far as in her lay, the necessity for the promise.

"Ah, mother, would that you were here! Life has grown complex and difficult of late, and without your ready help I am not able swiftly to see the right and wrong. It seems terrible, and I shrink back frightened at the thought of facing the future without you by my side to bid me 'God-speed,' and tell me that your prayers follow me. And yet—ah, mother, I love him! and when he asked me, by that love, to trust myself to him, how could I say him nay? Now all I can pray of you is—for this letter will reach you when I shall in all probability have joined my life with his—to forgive me, if you feel there is aught to forgive; and to believe, if any doubts have arisen whilst reading this, that in all things, in every thought of my heart, I am, as ever, thy loving, dutiful daughter,

"GERALDINE HAWTHORNE.

"Pray give my love to Pen, and bid her despair not. Josiah Sumner goes to Cambridge. He will doubtless return, covered with distinction, to seek her out in Endicot, where at that time I trust I may be with you. I never did think that Pen and I should have had our wedding-days so far apart."

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE BRIEF, SWEET DAY.

“We gained at last the sacred gate
Of wedlock, and the hand of fate
Lifted the latch, and we passed in
To the enchanted ground therein.”

HER wedding-day! Geraldine awoke after a few hours' sleep, with a curious tightness at her heart, and it was only after several moments of reflection she was able to recall the reason that, in a few hours maybe, she was to leave behind her for ever the name that had been hers now for nineteen years.

No shadows mingled with the brightness of the future as she knelt in her window in the early morning sunshine, dreaming nearly as impossible dreams of what was coming in that dim future, as when she had stood, fancy free, beneath the apple-blossoms at home. But at nineteen our dreams, perhaps mercifully, are never of shipwreck—always of sailing on indefinitely under sunny skies, over smiling blue waters. The clouds gather one by one; the dangers that must be avoided, the storms that break, all come to us, but in so gentle, so gradual a fashion, that it is only when we have fairly passed beyond the flush of youth that we realise, on looking back, that we have sailed beyond the charmed circle, and have left youth and safety, smiling seas and sunny skies, far behind, amongst the other fancies and dreams of long ago.

But Geraldine did not moralise, only went downstairs, and did the various tasks that fell to her lot in

Miriam's well-appointed household; prepared a dainty breakfast for Mr. Honeywood, who had passed a bad night, Jonathan reported, and was restless and feverish at present.

"Doubtless because he cannot accompany his regiment yet awhile; but he will be well enough shortly, if he would but cease to think about going."

And having given his verdict, Cousin Jonathan sat down and did full credit to the meal prepared for him; whilst Cousin Miriam, with a tender anxiety on her sweet face, went up with Geraldine's carefully prepared tray.

"Thou art up!" she exclaimed, as she opened the door. "Ah, but thou art very unwise; and Jonathan says thou hast not slept well, and art weary still, which I can see with my own eyes."

"No, Cousin Miriam, I am merely restless. See," stretching out his hand, and taking the tray from her, "let me put it down for you. There; it was kind of you to bring it up. Now, sit down," pulling a chair up to the table. "But perhaps you are going down to your own breakfast?"

"No, I have taken mine, and will remain here, or I fear my patient might not eat as much as would be good for him."

"No, I am not very hungry, I fear; but I will take something if you will stay and talk to me. Tell me," taking her hand in his, "how many days before I may ride?"

"Art thou so anxious to quit us?" gently stroking, as she spoke, the slender feverish hand that rested on hers.

"No, no; you surely do not credit me with such

base ingratitude But a soldier's life, you see, is active, and inaction is trying. It has made me feverish, the very thought of it."

"*It* alone?"

He coloured a little. "A bad night, I confess. I have not slept. My conscience, or somewhat, has kept me awake."

"Not thy conscience," Cousin Miriam said gently. "But weddings are anxious affairs, and I will also avow that the thought of to-day robbed me of rest. Thou wouldst tell me if it seemed to thee I was doing wrong to sanction it?"

He did not answer, but rose up and paced the room hastily once or twice; and then, his eyes falling on the gentle, troubled face, he paused, and sinking on his knees beside her—

"Why do you tempt me to be unfriendly?" he asked. "He is everything a friend should be—brave and strong, and always true. What more could one desire for a husband?"

"Nought, nought; only——"

"No, I will listen to nothing. There *is* nothing. He loves her—ah, yes, he truly loves her—and she does not hide her love. What more should we wish for them?"

"Nothing; only——"

"Again that 'only.' You must not remain to talk, neither must I listen, to treason." And then, after a moment's hesitation—"It is settled when——"

"He will let me know this morning."

But all the morning they waited, and it was only at two o'clock Geraldine received a hastily written line:—

"I cannot get up, even to see you, till seven o'clock. Be ready, then, if your courage has not failed without my presence to inspire it afresh. But no, I will not say such things, for I trust you.

"RALPH CALVERLEY."

And Geraldine folded the note and put it aside, and waited—not sewing even, making no pretence of doing anything, only waiting.

Such a strange wedding-day, that it seemed impossible to realise in what this waiting would terminate. The quiet hours sped, one after another. Mr. Honeywood did not appear; Jonathan was away from home; Miriam came in and out with a gentle remark or question, and through it all Geraldine sat on in the window, looking abroad with vacant eyes, pondering over the secrets of her future. It was as a quiet day of intercession, of preparation for the whatever might be coming.

Once Miriam laid a soft hand on her head and said, "Have you got a white dress, Geraldine? Black is unlucky for a bride."

But Geraldine shook her head. "Alas! no," she sighed; and then half smiled, as she said how sorely distressed Madam would be if ever it should come to her ears. "But perchance, in learning the news, she will be so astonished, she will forget to inquire in what gown I was married."

The words sounded strange in her ears, and she blushed as she said them.

In the dusk of the evening Ralph Calverley came to seek his bride. There were small signs of rejoicing. Most unwedding-like did the little party appear;

but the ceremony was performed securely enough, notwithstanding that in the little half-dark church Jonathan and Miriam were the only two witnesses. Geraldine, in her black dress, with white muslin kerchief, and soft white sleeves falling over her beautiful arms, and a hood drawn over her fair head, shone out against the gloom, a picture of perfect beauty. And Ralph Calverley, as he placed the ring upon her finger, thought he had never imagined anything to equal the white loveliness at his side. Then he heard the words giving her to him, to guard for ever, and he realised that they were married, that Geraldine was his, to have and to hold from that day forward; that her very name, which he had learned to consider sweeter than any music, had passed into his keeping.

He drew her hand through his arm, and led her down the silent aisle. At the door he stopped and spoke a few words to Miriam—words which tended to soften her heart a little, though not as much as she could have wished, and she was very angry herself that it was so.

“I thank you for trusting her to me till my country calls for me, when I will give her back into your care, until such time as I can come once more to claim her.”

Philip Honeywood was not well enough, he sent word, to attend the wedding. Before leaving the house, Geraldine had received a message, praying her to give him a few minutes' conversation. She went up to his room and found him lying on a couch, looking as haggard and heavy-eyed as he had done in the morning.

“Mistress Hawthorne, I must beg of you to pardon

me for asking you to come and wish me farewell; but in truth I am not very strong yet, and I fear I over-tired myself yesterday, so Cousin Miriam has forbidden me to stir."

"You need say nothing, sir," Geraldine replied, drawing a stool to his side and sitting down; "I am only grieved you should not be quite recovered yet. You must strive to be more prudent."

"After to-day I will strive, because Mistress Hawthorne so kindly bids it. Which reminds me, you will shortly cease to be Mistress Hawthorne. Ah, it is a grievous thing to think of that sweet name being lost!"

"Scarce lost, sir; only exchanged, and for the better."

"Perhaps so," and he sighed; "though it seems to me there will never be quite the same sweetness about Geraldine Calverley as about Geraldine Hawthorne. But now I am overlooking my last words I sent for you to hear. Once before I said them, you remember," speaking excitedly, "in the window, in the moonlight, at Endicot?"

The quick tender colour flew up into Geraldine's face, and she half rose; but he stretched out his hand to detain her.

"No; wait. I am about to say nothing you will regret hearing. Only, I would repeat one sentence I said then. Do you remember? That if—— Mind, I do not fear any ill for you. God grant that all your future may be as fair as I would choose it. But if any need for help *should* ever come,—help in which, were it at the cost of my heart's blood I could serve you, you have but to stretch out your hand—to cry to

me—and my life is in your hands, as,” his voice sinking, “my love is at your feet.”

“Ah, Mr. Honeywood! Sir, I know not what to say. What have I done to merit so much kindness?”

“You will promise that you will trust me so far,” he went on unheeding, speaking quickly and excitedly.

“I promise. After *him*, I know no one in the wide world in whom I would sooner trust.”

“That must content me then,” he said. “Trust, that is the sure foundation on which friendship is built. And as we can be nothing else, I like to think you are my friend.” He put out his hand as he spoke, and taking hers, “For ever true,” he said; and then loosing it, “Farewell, sweet friend. If you get all that I wish for you, life will be very fair and sunny; but if clouds should come, then I pray for you, that love may be all about you, to shield you as much as may be.”

He said nothing further; and she, with tear-dimmed eyes, could only falter “Farewell,” and so go forth to her new future.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT PATIENCE WAS WILLING TO WAIT.

“The pain is mine, as he is mine;
For me alone he keeps his love,—for all the world his sword.”

“My dearest mother, you know how unacquainted I am with a pen, and how difficult it is for me to express my thoughts by its aid. You will therefore pardon—as lack of power, not lack of will—the failure I make of trying to show my gratitude for your most tender letter, received but now. My eyes fill with tears when I read your words, that you have known me too long not to trust that I will do what seems right and best—which, indeed, I hope I have done; but it would have given me sorrow for ever had you disapproved of an act of mine which can now never be recalled. And so the joy and relief was great in proportion when I read those words, that you knew me well enough to put faith in my judgment of what was best. Now I only feel that I would give near all I possess to gain a kiss from your lips, but that must not be hoped for yet.

“You ask where and when I was married? It was in the late dusk of the summer evening, for Ralph could not get away from his many duties before. Kind Cousin Miriam and Jonathan Sweetapple gave me into his care; and she strove, I know, to help me forget that my mother was not there to bless me on my wedding-day. Only four days were vouchsafed me to learn how dear is a husband’s love, when he

was called away, and then I came back here to await—oh, I pray it may not be for long!—his return.

“Tell Pen that I saw and spoke to Josiah before his departure. He looked so gallant in his uniform, that I felt a thrill of pride to remember how shortly he will become one of us.

“Would that the clouds would lift a little, so that we might see what is likely to happen! Could you not find any one to bring you hither, or at least a safe escort to take me back to you? This sounds ungrateful to unselfish, much-loved Cousin Miriam, but she is not the mother of—I was just about to write Geraldine Hawthorne. Having so few occasions in which I take a pen, I forget that I have no longer a right to the name.

“*To Madame Hawthorne.*”

“Seven months to-day, my dear, dear mother, since I wrote to tell you of my marriage. Little then did I dream that so long time would elapse before the joyful day drew near when I should see him again. But only last night did the news come, and after a most wakeful night, I at once sit down to bid you share in my joy, as, but what now appears but a short time ago, I asked of you sympathy in my sorrow.

“Boston is ours! The news has come, and would that you were here to note the merriment, nay, the deep joy, that prevails! Flags flying; people assembled in every direction, discussing the last scrap of news; and, what is dearer and nearer to me, the name that is now—how proudly I wear it!—my own, on every lip, as the name of one who has done great things, and deserved well of his country. Ah, how

impatiently my heart beats at the thought of how many days must yet pass before I can tell him how dear his triumphs are to me!

“And then, when I think, to whom can I speak of my anxieties, save to her whose mother’s heart I have known to ache for my sorrows? When I think of to how many, during these sad weeks, the word has just been brought that husband, brother, lover, has given his life for the cause he might never learn to know victorious, then I seem to comprehend the mercies which have been about my path. Ah, dear mother! I can say no more. All your loving letters in this time of sore anxiety have opened so wide my heart, that I cannot but let it overflow with joy, now that the time for rejoicing has come. And amongst other joys, I may trust shortly to see you; for will not Josiah’s first moment of freedom take him to Endicot to seek his wife? And under his escort you will not fear to travel to me, just—it seems, in truth, a selfish demand—to see and rejoice with me. Ah, come, dear mother—I long sorely for you; though Cousin Miriam is most good and tender, and will not hear of my travelling alone to Boston, but talks of giving up her charge into the hands of none but the rightful owner; so I suppose we may look for a speedy departure from here.—Your dear daughter,

“GERALDINE.

“*P.S.*—When last I heard any news of Mr. Honeywood, he was doing fairly well, and the wound, thank God, was quite healed!”

CHAPTER XV.

"THE GLORY WAS ALL IN THE WORSHIPPER."

"The eyes smiled too,
But 'twas as if remembering they had wept,
And knowing they should, some day, weep again."

"At last!" It was a whisper from a full heart, and Geraldine, with Captain Calverley's arms about her, could find but few words wherein to express her joy and thankfulness. Over now the days and nights of anxiety and loneliness; and it was for some moments, of this, and this alone, that Geraldine could think. There was even a faint reflection of her joy visible on the stern countenance of her husband.

"You are thinner, I fear," she said, scanning each line of his face carefully from where she knelt beside his chair, her hands clasped on his knee. "And the lines here," touching her own smooth forehead, "seem deeper than they used to be."

"It is a rough road I'm travelling; it will scarce tend to make me young again. You," touching her cheek, "must guard the youth for both of us."

"There is something troubling you," she went on, unheeding his last words. But before he could reply, the door was thrown suddenly open, and Mr. Honeywood entered the room.

The two figures at once arrested his attention, and he paused, just inside the room, for a second before speaking. The picture before him, in its minutest

details, was never after quite obliterated from his memory.

The small room which he and Captain Calverley had worked in together through all these weeks, still retained a thousand reminders of their presence, in the shape of papers, maps, and books strown about,—his pipe, where he had laid it down, and on Ralph's table the plain unornamented sword that Geraldine had buckled on for him the day that the assassin's knife had been raised against his life; and by the table, in the heavy oak arm-chair, the only comfortable piece of furniture the room contained, Captain Calverley's upright figure, and kneeling by his side his wife. The straight folds of the riding habit she wore, showed to advantage the full curves and lines of her beautiful figure,—the dark green contrasting well with the bright brown of her hair and the delicate fairness of her complexion.

After that moment's irresolute pause,—“I must ask pardon,” he said, his lips curving into a smile; “but I had quite forgotten, Calverley, that you were a married man!”

At the opening of the door, and the sound of his voice, Geraldine had risen to her feet, and now stood facing him, a delicate colour in her cheeks.

“Ah, Mr. Honeywood, but I am rejoiced to see you also, and quite recovered from your wound, I trust?”

The quiet full notes of the voice, the calm grey eyes, looking serenely forth as of old from under the level brows, for a moment shook Philip Honeywood's calm with the memory of past days, but only for a moment.

"I am glad to see you, Mistress Calverley, looking so well and happy," taking her hand as he spoke. "Calverley and I have had enough of men's society; he has got back his wife, and I am counting the hours till I see Cousin Miriam."

He smiled as he spoke, and Geraldine smiled too.

"She will rejoice to see you also; but have you indeed been faithful to her all these many months?"

"No length of time could make one forget one's first love, Mistress Calverley," he answered; and then, turning to Captain Calverley, "Have you learned what is to become of us yet?"

"No," Ralph answered, his eyes darkening, rising as he spoke and pacing back and forth; "but if, after all I have done for them, they——"

"You must not look for gratitude," Philip said, lightly. "Read history, and you will find gratitude is not a characteristic of nations any more than of individuals."

But Captain Calverley did not heed his friend's words. Drawing a map towards him, he reseated himself in the great chair from which he had risen, and with a pencil began making marginal notes.

"I have won the right to be considered, at least," he said at last, turning and interrupting the low-toned conversation behind him, and speaking more vehemently than was his wont. "That command of Upshire's ought to be given to me; but it will not—I foresee it—just, forsooth, because they do not deem I might become a dangerous enemy, and they do so deem of others! But," rising hastily and pushing the papers away, his face settling down into its usual immovable calm, "we will not discuss politics now, in

this first hour of our meeting; instead I will show you, Geraldine, the room that I have caused to be prepared for you."

He opened a door as he spoke, and pointed into a small inner room, simply but tastefully furnished: there were a few flowers on a table in the window, and two or three nicknacks and books lying about. The tears came into Geraldine's eyes as she looked, and thought of the love that had arranged this in the midst of the business and realities of life, and she turned her grateful eyes to her husband.

"You must in chief thank Phil," he said, in reply to her glance, "for it was in great part his thought and work."

"I have many sisters," Phil answered pleasantly, "and they instructed me in all the things that women love."

"It requires a good heart, as well as the sisters' teaching, I think," Geraldine answered softly, "to have kept the knowledge these many years, and then to help my husband with it now."

Neither of the men said anything further, as Geraldine moved about the room examining its contents, with now and then a word of thanks as something new caught her eye.

"You will be happy here?" Ralph asked. "I shall be close at hand—that is," his brow darkening, "as long as I am here; but I doubt me that will not be for long."

At the tone of his voice, rather than his exact words, Geraldine felt a touch of alarm—the chill foreboding of a coming storm.

"How long?" she began; but before she had

concluded her sentence, she saw that her husband had gone back to his office-table, and it was on Phil Honeywood's face that fell her anxious, troubled eyes.

"How long?" he said, in answer to them rather than her words. "You mean before he has to go elsewhere? Not long, I fear. Mistress Calverley," stopping short, and leaning towards her, speaking low and quickly, "you have great influence with him—I believe you are the only person who has; teach him to be content."

Before Geraldine could answer, they were back in the other room, and the meaning of his enigmatical sentence, if there were any meaning in it, could not be demanded. There was a ring of something like disloyalty in the words, which made Geraldine step apart from the speaker, and move a little defiantly to her husband's side; and the movement, and the thought which prompted it, were not lost upon Phil Honeywood.

He left them alone soon afterwards, Geraldine standing by Ralph Calverley's side, following him, as he pointed out to her on the map before them, the course that seemed to him the right one to pursue.

"They are dilatory," he said, almost forgetting his audience in the pleasure of being able to speak unconstrainedly; "they do not follow up the advantage they have. They are hampered by fools who scarcely know what they want, nor how to set about obtaining it, if they did. There is the chance, but it will not be seized. But what nonsense I am talking! Forget all I have said. Let us speak of other things. Your mother,—you rejoice, do you not, at the prospect of her shortly appearing?"

Then the talk drifted away into other matters, and of this other conversation little was left in Geraldine's mind but the warning words of Phil Honeywood, and the energetic ones of Ralph Calverley. Perhaps it was small wonder that, accustomed as she had always been to note with tender, pitying eyes, the want of strength in her father's character,—a want of strength which had let him drift about so helplessly, and do such unsatisfactory work,—she should worship the strength of will and aim in her husband, regardless of the *self* on which the strength was spent.

It is always difficult to remember that the virtues we admire can acquire such weight as to fall over and mingle with the vices that lie beneath,—so difficult to remember that “we fall on the leaning side.”

CHAPTER XVI.

BEWARE.

“Ill comes disguised in many forms.”

IN the darkening twilight of a winter's evening, some ten months later, Geraldine Calverley and Pen, or as we must learn to call her, Mistress Sumner, sat together in a small room in one of the quieter streets of Boston. The fire had grown low all unheeded, so intent were they on their conversation; and it was not until an infant's low cry fell on their ears that they became aware of the darkness of the room and lateness of the hour. But at that sound both young

women instantaneously rose to their feet, forgetting for the moment, as they hastened to the side of the cradle, the dim uncertain present and future that was unfolding itself by the fortune of war.

Pen stooped and raised the child, and hushed it against her breast, bidding Geraldine the while seek a light and put a log on the fire; and when the orders were obeyed, both girls returned to their seats, though not to the subject that had before been under discussion. No; politics were forgotten in warming the small pink toes at the cheerful blaze, in kissing the tiny hands which lay curled up like rose-leaves.

"May I hold him for a short while, Pen?" questioned Geraldine; and as Pen laid him in her arms, "Ah, but he is a marvellous child, Pen! See how he stretches out his arms! Truly, I believe he learns to know me!"

"You will think less of him, I fear, Di," was Pen's reply, "when you have your own in your arms; but meanwhile, mine has a big hold on your heart, has he not?"

"He will always have, dear Pen; do not fear that I shall change."

Pen paused in her bustling to and fro. Such a matronly Pen as she had grown since those old days at Endicot Farm! The dark eyes, though they flashed and sparkled still, had a tenderer, deeper expression than of yore. The love that had been about her had improved her,—she had grown a stronger, better woman, under its sheltering care.

"Change, Di!" she repeated, pausing by Geraldine's side. "No, I do not fear that. Sometimes," speaking in her old impetuous fashion, "I almost

feel inclined to say I cannot *hope* it. Oh," turning away, "do not heed me. I speak hastily and foolishly, as I often do—at least so Jos says; but it is only because you were always dear to me that I fear for you. I am not one to forget how good to me you were one night when all seemed going crooked, and other folk said ill words and had ill thoughts about me."

"I knew you better—that was all, Pen," Geraldine answered gently; "you must not number loving you amongst my virtues. If I did you on occasion a good turn, you must not forget that there was some one who, whenever she could, aroused the dreamer Geraldine Hawthorne, and reminded her of many a thing which elseway she would have forgotten, and thus saved her many a scolding."

Pen smiled, then brushed away the tears that had gathered in her dark eyes. At that moment the door opened to admit Josiah Sumner—his well-knit strong frame and honest face much as we remember them, but a shade of anxiety in the expression, which made his wife exclaim as he closed the door, moving towards him as she spoke, "Any news?"

"Mistress Calverley?" unheeding his wife's question, and taking Geraldine's offered hand; "I am glad to see you." And then quickly added, "Not anything of real importance, but I fear that wife and child will have to learn to do without me soon."

"Ah, Jos!"

"The fortune of war," he went on gently, stroking with his great hand Pen's dark head. "From what I heard to-night, it will not be long, I guess, before Calverley's Horse gets its orders for Belton."

"For Belton?" repeated Geraldine. She had laid the now sleeping child back in its cradle, and was standing by Pen's side. "Why, Jos, I thought——"

"Yes," interrupted Josiah, speaking nervously for him, "so many another one has said. And the captain? He will not like it, I think. But there, he will content himself with saying, 'tis his duty.'"

Geraldine did not reply, only said, "Good-night, Pen—I must go; it grows late and dark. Ah, and here comes mother, just as I would fain see her! though 'tis but to wish you farewell," she went on, turning to Madam, who stood in the doorway. "No," as Josiah said something against her returning alone, "I need no one to accompany me. It is but a few steps, and the streets are quiet enough. Dear mother," as the parlour door closed behind them, and they stood together in the little passage—"dear mother," speaking with most unusual excitement, and throwing her arms about her mother's neck as she kissed her "good-night," "there is trouble coming. I feel it—I know it. Ah, what can it be?"

"You are tired, Geraldine," Madam answered. Her voice was less sharp than in the old days down at Endicot, and her face, in its close plaited widow's cap, had grown softer in these two years of anxiety.

"Yes, I am tired," Geraldine assented more quietly, though evidently with an effort. "That must be it; for I am not prone, am I," with a faint smile, "to imagine evil? It comes speedily enough," with a sigh.

"Yes," Madam replied; "small use beckoning to it to approach quicker." And then, with a change of

tone, and taking Geraldine's hand in hers, "A baby in one's arms helps one through many troubles."

"Yes," said Geraldine, absently, kissing her as she spoke, "I suppose so."

"But you will not go alone?" Madam said, as Geraldine lifted her hand to the latch. "Jos would willingly accompany you."

"No need, mother," she replied. "In truth I like the quiet homeward walk. 'Tis but a few yards, and I trust I shall find Ralph at home before me. Then 'good-night' once more."

Out in the dark night, under the star-lit sky, Geraldine's thoughts at once reverted to what had been troubling her when those few words had escaped her to her mother. As a rule, she was so silent, so serene, apparently so untroubled amid all the troubles by which she was surrounded, that that anxious wounded cry that had escaped her had been interpreted in her mother's heart as merely the result of a momentary jar, which in her present state of health had affected her more than was necessary. But it was not so. Deep down in her heart, hidden away under that calm serene expression, lay a terrible consciousness that one day the calm present would be cut away from under her feet, and that she would awake to find herself struggling amongst quicksands. She had no definite consciousness of evil—could not, if she had tried, have put into words what she feared; but the shadow of it was about her path none the less surely. The very strength of her love, which had grown with every passing day, till now it seemed to have become, in truth, a portion of her life, served as a sign-post to warn her by what road sorrow might be looked for.

Instinct always teaches us to look for danger in that direction where lie the hopes and treasures of our life. So when Geraldine thought of sorrow, it was to Ralph her thoughts turned. And it was not altogether without foundation that she felt anxious. Vague rumours reached her, from the outside world as well as from the narrower one of home, that Captain Calverley was not altogether satisfied with the position that had been assigned him of late. The rumours were vague, for Ralph told her nothing. He never had been a communicative man, and as a husband his conversation with her was distinctly separated from his soldierly hopes and fears. If he were content or not, he said nothing to her; and Mr. Honeywood, whom she saw often, but not intimately—the past that lay between them having had a dividing tendency, at least socially—she would not interrogate. So of Ralph Calverley's plans and prospects she knew but little; but from casual words he had let fall, she knew that doing outpost duty in a far-off spot was not what he had in his mind, and the slight, if such were intended, fully occupied her mind. "But after all," she soliloquised, as she sauntered on under the chill starry sky, "wherever he may be, if he is doing his duty, that should and will suffice him. Surely it is all the more needful to send good men afar off, to help with counsel, and encourage by their valour, those whose loyalty might wax cold by reason of their being so distant; and no work is unimportant in such a cause." And as she had once said before, "Obedience is such a simple thing——"

Here her thoughts were interrupted by the sudden appearance at her side, and then a few steps in front

of her, of a shadowy figure, enveloped in a mantle, which, pushing against her, attracted her attention. Involuntarily she watched it, and as she watched, a sort of numbness came over her: she was standing in a window; it was shadowy twilight, and a figure, a creeping black figure, was making its way through the crowd below. A gleam through the dark air, and with a shudder that brought her wandering fancies swiftly back from that never-to-be-forgotten night, Geraldine returned to a consciousness of the present, and of the cloaked figure stealing so silently along by her side; and almost involuntarily she paused, so as to allow of its passing her. But such was evidently not its intention, for as she slackened her pace the stranger paused also, and showed signs of desiring to fall behind. In so doing, some slight movement disarranged the hood drawn over his head, and the starlight for a moment threw into strong relief his features. A low inarticulate cry came from Geraldine's lips, and she stood still.

"You need not fear, I will not harm you."

"Fear!" repeated Geraldine, "I do not *fear* you." And then, after a second's pause, "It is not for *ourselves* we fear death."

"Death!" retorted the other, mockingly. "No, you need not tremble for that—for yourself, or for others. One day you may live to think even an assassin's knife is not the worst sort of weapon: there are others that cut deeper."

"Permit me to pass," said Geraldine, lifting her head proudly. "I do not choose to bandy words with a spy, a traitor! I know you," after a second's pause. "You are Hiram Mead, who was *bought*," with calm

scorn on the word, "by the English, and who gains a livelihood by betraying his own countrymen."

"Spy! traitor!—call me what you will, Mistress," said the other, and for a moment a faint blush rose to his cheek—"women, fair women especially," with a mocking bow, "are privileged. But have a care"—with a swift change of tone, as he moved aside—"that your head, proud as it is, is not humbled to the very dust. There are surer means even than the swift vengeance of sharp steel."

"Say what you mean," cried Geraldine, attempting to bar his passage; but he had disappeared, leaving that enigmatical sentence as his last word.

That night a baby daughter was born to Geraldine Calverley—a baby daughter that Ralph had only time to catch but a glimpse of; for with the morrow's light he had to depart for Belton, leaving his wife to Madam's watchful care.

CHAPTER XVII.

"IN THE STILLY NIGHT."

"Revile him not,—the tempter hath
A snare for all,
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall.

Scorn! Would the angels laugh to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven?"

SOME men standing on the heights, and marking the fair flowery ways that lead to the deeps beneath, take, almost unconsciously, the first step that leads them on the downward way. A step here, a slide there, and lo, by many devious paths, overgrown and hidden by moss and flowers, they find themselves on the broad level below, with scarcely a jar or untoward sensation to remind them of the distance they have come.

But there are others: men whom the tricking verdure does not deceive—men who take no gentle sliding steps, but who, standing on the heights, of a sudden cast themselves down into the abyss below, and who, even if by the aid of the very strength which, given as a safeguard, served to achieve their ruin, ever climb up wearily the heights from which they fell, must yet always suffer in every limb the ache, the throb, of that never-to-be-forgotten fall.

Eleven o'clock on a cold, wet May night. In a small dreary room, stood Ralph Calverley. It is hard to believe that it is the same man we knew first in quiet Endicot, the hero of Geraldine Hawthorne's girlish days—the man who, in what now seems a distant, old-world era, looked away her young, fond heart. It is hard in the man who now stands before us—with hunted, miserable eyes, which look this way and that, everywhere but on the face of him who is standing before him,—this man, in his wet, travel-stained riding-cloak, which he still wears wrapped about him,—to recognise the hero to whom the villagers of Endicot had bowed down, and who had won for his own, the love of Geraldine Hawthorne. Ah, if she could have seen him now!

"What are you doing here?" he said at last, speaking low and vehemently. "How dare you venture here? Did I not tell you——"

"To remind you, if need be," said the other, "that to-night"—lifting an insignificant, close-shaven face.

"I have promised," interrupted Ralph Calverley. "I am not likely to forget it," with a bitter laugh, raising his haggard face as he spoke.

"Promised," jeered the other. "Do you think——" And then rapidly changing his tone, as he noted the look in his hearer's face—"Well, well, I will go yonder, and await you there," and he turned towards the door. As its closing announced his visitor's departure, Captain Calverley flung himself down into an arm-chair, and drew some papers towards him.

"They have brought it on themselves," he muttered. "For years I have spent myself in their service, and with what results? I see others, my inferiors in

age, experience, everything, put over my head—given the work, the position, for which I entreat in vain. Ah,” rising impatiently to his feet, and pacing back and forth, “why do I think of it? It serves but to unnerve and anger me! The die is cast,” with a sneer—an ugly sneer—though there was no one to see; “I am beyond the pale now! Who is there?” he said quickly, as the handle turned.

“It is I—Honeywood. It is late, I know,” as Captain Calverley would have spoken; “but just for a moment, I thought I would seek you, though I have not much to say,” seating himself as he spoke.

Captain Calverley did not sit down, neither did he continue pacing the apartment, but remained motionless, just where he was standing when his visitor entered. As he said nothing, Philip Honeywood was obliged to break the silence.

“You are very unapproachable,” he said at length, with a nervous laugh, “and you grow more so every day; but we have been friends a long time,” and then he paused again.

“Well?”

“I am sorry for you,” Mr. Honeywood went on, rising and moving nearer to his captain as he spoke—“upon my soul I am. Now don’t turn away; I know you hate sympathy, and all that sort of thing—still, all the same, I think they have dealt hardly by you, after all you’ve done for them, in sending you on to another out-of-the-way place.”

“Keep your sympathy,” said Captain Calverley in a stern voice, cutting in two his companion’s flow of words, “till you meet some one who may merit it.”

A quick red flush rose to Mr. Honeywood’s cheek,

and a sharp word to his lips, but with an effort he stopped himself.

"We are too old friends," he said, after that moment's pause, "for us to quarrel now, however much you may desire it. Good-night."

Long afterwards, he remembered that his offered hand was not taken, that the dark, sombre eyes—the eyes of his friend—were never once raised to his. At the time he did not heed it.

Left once more alone, Captain Calverley resumed his pacing up and down. The hours waned—the rain beat against the window-panes in gusts of fury, but he heeded it not, as with eyes bent upon the rough, boarded floor, he continued his march with slow, even footsteps.

One o'clock. The sound of the single stroke falling on the silent night seemed to rouse him, and he lifted his eyes—into which had come again the hunted expression they had worn when talking to his first visitor—and looked about him.

"I must go," he muttered hastily, wrapping about him the thick folds of his riding-cape; and then suddenly sinking on to a chair, with a passionate outburst, terrible to witness in one so silent, so self-contained—"O Geraldine! Geraldine!" he cried, burying his face in his hands. "It seems to me that never till this moment have I realised that I am losing you. What am I gaining in exchange? Everything," bringing his hand down with emphasis on the wooden table, and lifting his head,—“everything that I have craved for all these years: power, a gratified ambition which feels itself able to reign, and reign well. Why, what

is it I am regretting? Just one woman," rising impatiently to his feet. "I, who never regret,—and I do not now," raising his haggard eyes,—“I have thought it all out long ago. It is done; there is no room in my life now for regret or for repentance.” He paused a moment in silence, then took out of his pocket a small case, and opened it. It contained a miniature of his wife—of the girl who, in the old days, had been Geraldine Hawthorne. Long he looked at it,—at the grey eyes, the sweet mouth with its little sorrowful curve, and the bright hair which he had often stroked and kissed. At length he clasped the case, and was about to return it to his pocket, when, with a sudden change of action, he seated himself by the table, and drawing a sheet of paper towards him, wrote across it: “If you ever receive this, you will know everything,—at least in so far as, in the world, we can know everything. You gave it to Ralph Calverley, the man you loved; therefore he who writes these words does not consider that it is his to keep.” No signature; nothing else. He folded the scrap of paper about the case, sealed it, and then scrawled across it, “Mistress Geraldine;”—paused a second, and then added hastily, “Calverley.” That done, he rose to his feet—once more, saving for the haggard eyes and worn cheeks, the self-contained soldier; the outburst of passion a thing of the past,—a thing almost incredible when one looked at the dark, still face,—almost incredible, till one’s eyes rested on the hands fastening the cloak, and noted that they trembled slightly even yet; and then there was a heavy step across the floor, an instant’s hesitation whilst the lock was being turned,

then silence in the small, cheerless room, saving for the ticking of the old clock that told how time passed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOST LEADER.

“I am now all bereft—
As when some tower doth fall,
With battlements and wall,
And gates, and bridge, and all,
And nothing left.”

ONE dreary wet night in May, who remembers? After all, abuse it as we may, May is a month of promise, and one rainy day is soon forgotten: the sun soon shines again. So, though the night of the 29th of May had seemed more like November than was quite agreeable, yet when the 20th of July dawned warm and balmy, with a scent of summer in the sunshiny air, the good people of Boston overlooked the previous rains, and issued forth to welcome back the regiment which had once been so long in their midst, and which to-day was to re-enter the city. The streets were full of people as the regiment rode in—the new flag, with its stars and stripes, floating above their heads,—rode in through the brilliant sunshine—brilliant still, although it was late afternoon; and many a comment and exclamation fell from the lips of the lookers-on.

“What has brought them back?” one man asked of his neighbour. “I thought they were to be straight removed to join the Washington army. It is too fine

a regiment to dawdle about a town. Word was brought, so I have heard tell, that there was disaffection in the ranks. It was even told me——”

But before he got any further, his attention was diverted by the foremost rider having reached his side. And eager cheers are greeting that foremost man as he rides down the street. “Long live Captain Honeywood!” And Captain Honeywood bowed and smiled to those about him, in gracious acknowledgment of the welcome. The cheers, echoing down the street, could be distinctly heard in a room that a man and his friend had once striven to adorn, by way of welcome, for a loving, new-made wife.

An hour later, Phil Honeywood mounted the stairs that led to the small room where he and Ralph Calverley had worked together for so long; but his step was not so light as it had been in those earlier days. Almost involuntarily he paused with his hand on the lock, and as he turned it and looked into the empty apartment, a memory, swift and painful, came to him of another day when he had stood thus on the threshold, and had seen the beautiful woman, love and pride lighting up her face, as she knelt beside his friend. “His friend!”—the words echoed in his ears with dreary mockery; and with an impatient sigh he closed the door behind him, and crossing the room, knocked gently at the further door that led into what had been Geraldine’s sitting-room, in those happy months so long past. Receiving no answer,—which, indeed, he had not expected,—after a moment’s hesitation he turned the handle, and having done so, stood still, as if turned into stone, in the doorway. The room was darkened by means of heavy curtains

drawn across the windows, so that even the calm evening twilight that still lit up the streets, was barely represented here. The pretty room he had learnt to know gay with flowers, and which had always been littered with odds and ends of woman's work and idleness, was now bare and dull. Glasses of flowers that had evidently, on some far-off day, been arranged with care, had withered and died, and been left to tell their own disconsolate tale. But what arrested his attention, and stifled the exclamation that rose to his lips, and made the sad surrounding seem as an unimportant background in a terrible picture, was the figure of the woman, the only occupant of the dreary room. Prone upon the bare, carpetless floor, her face hidden in her outstretched arms, her black dress falling in heavy folds about her, as she lay there so still, that, but for a slight shudder that every now and then shook her, as a cheer or other sound reached her ears through the darkness and stillness, she might have been dead.

With a hoarse cry he crossed the room, and then, almost unconsciously, "Geraldine!" he said, in painful tones as he stood beside her.

At the sound of his voice she slowly rose to her feet, and faced him.

For a minute after that cry he made no attempt to speak,—only looked at the hollow eyes, the white cheeks, the mouth with its curves and lines of anguish, and thought of the serene, gentle woman he had parted from—looked, and cursed in his heart the man who had wrought such a change. But something must be said, the terrible silence must be broken somehow—all he had to tell, be told.

But before the first word had left his lips—almost as if in answer to his thoughts—Geraldine lifted her hand with a sudden gesture, drawing back a step as she spoke.

“Hush!” she said in a voice that had, like her face, lost its youth. “Hush! not one word; I will hear nothing. Ah!”—clasping her hands, and her voice losing its decided, almost defiant ring, and sinking to a sort of tearless sob, most pitiful in such a proud, self-reliant woman,—“ah! of your pity say nothing. Every word,” wringing her hands together, “is a stab right through my heart.”

“Do you really think that I would hurt you?” he said. “Oh, but how little you know me!”

“Hurt me?” she repeated in a softer tone. “Not in intention, I *think*. But,” turning away, “everything hurts me,—every touch is agony: sympathy, pity, abuse, it is all the same to me; I can bear nothing.”

He paused a moment irresolutely, puzzled as to what to do or say next. He strode over to the darkened window and leaned against it, pondering and wondering in his heart what would be the outcome of this terrible, black misery. As he stood thus, he felt a gentle touch on his arm, and turned his head to find Geraldine’s eyes, darkened with passion and pain, looking into his.

“Tell me,” she said, low and quickly, whilst a red stain that faded as quickly as it came, passed over her fair face—“tell me,” leaning nearer yet, and her voice falling to a hoarse whisper, “did he say nothing?—leave no message? Oh,” with a sharp cry, as of one in physical pain, “had he in truth forgotten me?”

She had her hands clasped tight about Phil’s arm

now, and her agonised eyes, too agonised for tears, were gazing into his, in such a fashion that he felt a mist bedimming his own.

"Mistress Geraldine," he said, laying his hand over the trembling ones on his sleeve; and his voice shook so, that he was perforce obliged to pause.

"You were his friend," she went on hastily; "that is the reason that I appeal to you. There is no one else to whom I can speak——"

"Mistress Geraldine," he interrupted, "do not, I pray of you, look like that, but listen to me without fear. You know I would so willingly spare you any pain I could. See," taking from his pocket the little packet that contained the case, and putting it into her hands, pointing as he spoke to her own name written upon it.

She did not say one word, but turned away to the table with the faded flowers upon it, and with trembling fingers broke the seal. She read the few words in silence—in silence so deep, that after a few seconds Phil Honeywood turned his head to see what was happening,—turned his head just in time to see her, her face buried in her arms outstretched on the table, break forth into sobs so deep, so heart-breaking, that involuntarily he moved over to her side. What horrible tale, as yet untold, had the little packet revealed?

"Do not fear," she said, after a while, but without looking up, as she heard his anxious questions and felt his hand on her shoulder; then, with an effort, rousing herself,—“do not fear for me,” she repeated; “these tears are nothing—they are relief.” Then pushing the case towards him, and rising to her feet,

—"It is but my own portrait you have brought me back."

She said nothing further, but stood once more erect and still, the thunder-shower over, but yet with somewhat less of that terrible, overstrained look in her hollow eyes, that had sent such a pang to Phil Honeywood's heart.

He, meanwhile, took the miniature in his hands, and looked at the face of the girl who had won his first love—at the grey serious eyes, the bright unpowdered hair, the soft curves of the lovely mouth—and then lifting his eyes, noted the terrible wreck that he who had won her heart had made of her.

"Mistress Geraldine," he began. He could not find a voice to call her by her married name,—the name that neither of them had yet dared speak.

Something in his tone vaguely alarmed her. Though less defiantly than at first, still she lifted her hand with a gesture of silence. Then, speaking fast and low—

"Hear me," she began pleadingly, "but tell me nought." Then coming a step nearer, "you were his friend"—a slight pause—"you have taken his place. "No," as he would have interrupted, "I know it all, only I cannot bear to have it said. And you have been good to me, so I tell you that if it had not been for you, I fear greatly I should have gone mad. When I heard those shouts this afternoon, those cheers for you,—you see how calmly I talk to you now, so do not look so fearful—I could not have spoken thus an hour ago,—when those horrid sounds reached me, I could do nothing but cower down there," pointing to the floor, "and put my fingers in my ears, and feel

my heart was broken. But now," laying a trembling hand on his, "despise me if you will,—I think shame of myself, for I am a proud woman, you know, Mr. Honeywood—but the shame and disgrace, the ruin, the misery, are for the moment almost forgotten, just because,"—her voice sinking,—“I have learnt that I had some place in his remembrance.”

Philip Honeywood did not speak, his eyes were so full of tears; but for a moment he just touched with his lips the hot trembling hand that rested on his own.

“Are you alone here?” he ventured to ask by-and-by, as she sat on silent.

“Alone *here?*” she repeated, with a bitter half laugh that pained him like a stab when he heard it,—“*I* have no right here. It was only that I might escape to some place where I might hear and see nothing; that knowing this room was as yet untenanted, I ventured to creep in here at early dawn.”

“And you have been here ever since?”

“Surely.” And then noting the compassion in his look. “At the least, I was alone. No, you need not pity me—the anguish was bearable here. Yonder, with Josiah Sumner returning home, and Pen and Madam rejoicing over him—ah, I could not have borne it! Now,” with a wan half smile, terrible to see, “you have given me just enough comfort, just enough to keep me alive to-night—to-morrow——”

“And to-morrow?” he inquired, seeing that she paused.

“Ask no questions, I pray of you,” she said, her eyes falling under his, and a faint red dyeing her cheeks. “You must remember,” with a faint resump-

tion of her earlier defiant manner, "that you are outside my life now."

"I never thought to hear you say so."

"Forgive me," softening again, and lifting up a hooded cloak as she spoke, that lay on a chair where hasty hands had thrown it, "it is growing late. Now that it is dark,"—nervously—"I think I will go. I *must* go," she corrected.

He wrapped the cloak about her in silence, and then observing how white she looked, "You must take something to eat first." And as Geraldine shook her head, "Then a glass of wine. No; I will not allow you to depart thus. On your own showing, you have taken nothing all day." As he spoke, he opened a box that stood on a table at the other end of the room. "See," with a smile, "I have not forgotten where Mistress ——" And then pausing, and altering his sentence, "By right good luck, here are some biscuits. Now I will mix you a little brandy-and-water out of my flask, and that will revive you—at least give you the strength to go home." He slurred over the last word, but she did not seem to heed it. She said nothing, but drank as he bid her, and she had a shade more colour afterwards. "Now," he said, putting her cloak about her, "it were as well, perhaps, that we should start."

"*We*," she repeated, drawing back; and he observed that the hand that held the folds of the cloak about her—the hand on which gleamed her wedding-ring,—shook; but her voice was fairly steady, though she did not look at him as she said, "No, no, I will go alone; I would rather," moving towards the door.

But he was there before her.

"Indeed, Mistress Geraldine, it is useless your desiring such a thing. It has grown dark, and for the sake of my own ease of mind, I could not permit your walking about alone. Added to which, you are tired, and nigh unfit to walk."

"But," she stammered, always with her eyes turned away from his, "you do not know. Oh!"—breaking off despairingly, and burying her face in her hands, as she stood before him—"I can bear it alone: but with you!"—a low moan followed her words.

For an instant, as he looked at the beautiful despairing figure, a temptation, as strong as ever assailed him in his life, urged him to essay if tender words, *his* tender words, might perchance heal the terrible wound; but it was only for a moment. Then quite calmly, "Mistress Geraldine," he said, "you would not, I think, wish to hurt me—I have been your friend for too long; so you will let me accompany you, until you are safe with your mother. Do not fear that any words of mine shall wound you."

"You have proved that," she replied, raising her head once more; "I will do whatever you wish," drawing the dark hood over her fair bright hair as she spoke.

Not another word passed between them till they stood at the foot of the steep, narrow stairs; then Geraldine shrank back a little, as Captain Honeywood laid his hand on the lock of the door. "Look out," she said in a low, hesitating whisper, and he understood.

"The street is nearly deserted," he answered, standing in the doorway and glancing up and down.

It had grown dark, for which he was thankful; for

his own heart sank at the prospect of either himself or his companion being recognised.

What cruel wounds might she not have to bear, if this were the case? So he rejoiced in the twilight, which had grown so dim that it was easy to pass unrecognised. He drew her arm through his own, as they stepped into the outer air, and passed down the silent street. A few solitary passengers passed them, that was all, and at length they entered the narrow street in which Pen Sumner lived. As they turned the corner, two men brushed against them, or rather against Philip Honeywood, who was on the outside. They were talking loud and earnestly, and their words were easily heard by the silent man and woman.

"Turned traitor, that is about it," said one, and added reflectively, "one marvels what rewards a man like Calverley for such dirty work."

"Gold!" retorted the other sneeringly. "You forget, friend, that to some, English gold is better worth having than mere honour. Our Republican moneybags are, I fear, not over well filled."

"Well, anyway," rejoined the other, "I am glad the luck has fallen to Honeywood; he was always a good man. No traitor's tricks to be feared from him."

Then they passed out of hearing, and Philip felt his companion shrink away from him in such a manner, that he instinctively tightened his hold on her arm, fearing she would fall. But she said nothing, only for one swift moment raised her eyes to his; and that glance, that woful, terrified glance, was never quite forgotten by him so long as he lived.

But he said nothing either, and at length they stood before the door of Josiah Sumner's house. Ar-

rived there, she spoke in hoarse accents, "Go; I do not wish,"—and then, as if fearful of seeming ungrateful, "you have been good; I would rather enter alone."

"Farewell," he said gently, and turned away; and when, after a few seconds, he looked back, the door had been opened, and the black, cloaked figure had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

ICHABOD.

“O sirs, a light is quenched afar;
Look up, my masters, we have lost a star!”

“No; she says again that she would prefer not to see you,—not as if to hurt you, but,” here Pen Sumner the speaker’s dark eyes filled with tears, and she moved hastily across the room to where the sleeping child lay in its cradle.

There was a look of sorrow in Josiah Sumner’s plain, honest face, as he paced up and down the small room, but for a second he did not answer his wife’s words. At last, “I would give much, Pen,” with a puzzled expression of countenance, “to know in what manner we could aid, or be of comfort to her. Though as to comfort, poor soul! I fear there is not much of that to lay hold of.”

“It seems so hard,” said warm-hearted Pen, “that she should have been so good to me when I was in trouble, and that now, when she is thus sorely grieved, I can do nought for her.”

“Do not think that, wife,” raising her face tenderly with his large, rough hand; “the sight of your tears, and your anxious loving face, cannot but help her.”

“She was always so good, Josiah,” went on little Mistress Sumner, earnestly: “even when she used to

anger me most, I always knew that; and now I, who was less good, suffer less. It seems so strange."

But Josiah kissed her, with an incredulous shake of his head. "You were young, my dear," he said, "then, and now you are a dear little wife and mother,—that is the only difference I see in you."

"That is because you are so good and true," replied Pen, raising herself on tiptoe to kiss him. Then returning to the original subject: "But, Jos, what is to become of her? Do you know," her voice falling, "I greatly fear that if she remains on here, with nought but *it* to think of, that she will die."

"Ah, Pen," cried Josiah, with a sort of groan, "how could he do it! Such a man! Surely there must be some deeper mystery in it than we can comprehend. He must have been sorely tempted first," ended Josiah Sumner, with honest loyalty, as he thought of the man he had so long worshipped, "ere he stooped to soil his honour in such fashion."

"I never did think much of him myself," said Pen, candidly; "but for Di's sake, I wish, oh, I wish, my own fears of him had come to nought! But here is Madam," turning at the opening of the door.

No longer the brisk energetic housewife of Endicot days, but thinner and whiter; perhaps in part from the stiff whiteness of her widow's cap, but surely also because of the bitter ache her mother's heart was knowing.

"She does not need me now, Josiah, so I have come down to sit awhile here, for fear she should feel she is always watched. I never cared for him overmuch,"—(Pen's words again. Surely it behoves us to gain love, if we ever are likely to need the world's

sympathy!)—"never. But now," raising her eyes to those of Josiah, "I could find it in my heart, looking at her, to curse the day that he was born."

"No, Madam," said Josiah in a troubled voice, taking her hand in his, "I could not let you say so. You see," apologetically, "I have known him a long while now, and always esteemed him so highly, that perchance it is impossible for me to comprehend it all fully and fairly. But there must be something—of that I feel certain, could we but gain a glimpse through the darkness. I know," simply, after a pause, as no one spoke, "that he must have suffered."

There was no response, save a low muttered "Traitor!" from Pen's lips, as she bent over the cradle, and a sigh from Madam, which seemed to frame itself into, "He has broken *her* heart."

Truly the sins for which she has no sympathy, never find harsher justice meted out to them, than when it is a woman who pronounces judgment.

Josiah looked from one to the other, and then dropping Madam's hand, asked where she thought Geraldine would like to go so soon as the fancy should seize her to leave Boston. "Anywhere else," he added, "perchance she would suffer less."

"I have written to Cousin Miriam," answered Madam, "asking if she would take her in for a while. She is fond of the old people, and perchance would weary less than with me at the farm, and if she were with them I could see her often; later, I suppose she will come home with me." An unspoken question in Josiah's face made her add hastily, "No; I trust, for one, we shall never hear his name again. She has never alluded to him; she feels and knows, as we do,

that he is nothing to her, can be nothing to her, now. It is as if he were dead," with a half sob. "But she is young; she suffers now terribly—more, of course, because of the sting added to the death; but she will forget in time."

"I trust so, indeed," said Pen, with shining eyes, as she hushed her baby on her breast. "By-and-by, we must help her to bury it all away."

"Poor Ralph Calverley!" said Josiah. "It seems, then, he is to pay with *everything*, for that which he gains. I fear he will live to repent such an evil bargain."

That same night a woman in a heavy cloak, the hood carefully drawn over her head, in such a manner as to throw into deepest shadow her face, passed down the street.

Poor Geraldine! Amongst many other trials, perhaps nothing hurt her more than that terror she suffered always, lest she should be recognised, and suffer fresh stabs from cruel, bitter tongues. Arrived at the well-known door which led to the rooms where she had passed her happy married life, she paused for a moment in her swift way, and looked irresolutely upwards.

"If it is open," she said half aloud, laying her hand on the lock. "Ah, I cannot resist it," as the door yielded to her touch. "Recognised or not, I must just take one glance, to see if I left it here. *He* is not here; I have learned he now lives elsewhere. At the worst," entering as she spoke, "I shall encounter but some soldier. Say what he will, he can but bid me begone."

Thus thinking, and talking in low, dreamy tones, she reached the door which opened into the office, where Ralph Calverley and Phil Honeywood used in olden times to work together, and after a second's pause, turned the handle and entered the apartment, to find that it had an occupant, though not the one she had half feared, but Philip Honeywood.

For the first moment she almost regretted that it was not the soldier she had expected. He was seated at the table—Ralph Calverley's table—writing. What a pang that sent to her heart, none can tell.

"Come in, I pray of you," he said gently, noting that she paused on the threshold, and stilling his voice to as quiet tones as he could find, scarce daring to rise from his chair, for fear that he should scare her. "You were seeking me," he went on; "is there aught I can do for you?"

"I ventured in," she said, "when I found the door ajar, to look yonder," pointing towards the door behind him, "if I did not leave there the portrait you brought me. I have sought it ever since in vain."

"It is quite safe," he made answer. "I found it, and have kept it till such time as I should have an opportunity of returning it."

He had time to note, as he spoke, the flush of excitement on her pale cheeks, the brilliance, the unnatural brilliance, of her eyes—and a vague feeling of uneasiness seized him. He said nothing, however, not knowing how to put his uneasiness into words; but taking a few steps, he opened the inner door which led into her own deserted sitting-room, and after a second's hesitation she followed him.

Once inside the room, standing close beside her

he said in a low voice, "Mistress Geraldine, will you not tell me what you are going to do?"

With a startled, terrified expression, she glanced at him, and then made a hasty step towards the door, there pausing. "No, no," she said, somewhat wildly; "no—ask me nothing. It is well, far better for both of us, that you should ask nothing. I have looked in here, and bidden it farewell."

"Farewell!" he interrupted. "Then you *are* going. Just tell me, is it to Cousin Miriam?"

She shook her head; and then, after a moment: "You are good, I know you would not betray me; but all the same, it were as well you should know nothing. I have fought it all out alone," with a shudder, "during these past terrible days. Now it is over. This," with a glance round the room, "is farewell to youth, and pride, and honour—nearly everything, is it not? Small wonder I wished to look upon its grave." And then he understood her, or feared he did.

"Ah, Geraldine, Geraldine!" he groaned, looking with passionate grief at the still, white figure, "do you realise what you are doing? I know you so well. When it is done, your life will scarce, I fear, be worth the having."

"I have counted the cost," she replied drearily. "And tell me," almost fiercely, "what is it worth here to me—*now*?"

He did not answer; what was there to be said?

Almost immediately, in a softer voice, she went on, lifting her cloak as she spoke: "You have never seen her, have you?" raising her arms, so as to let the light he still held fall on a small, sleeping child.

He leaned over it, and noted for a minute the tiny fair face and wee hands.

"She was born the very night you left," with a little shiver—a little shiver, the cause whereof he well understood, as he realised that since then the father had never seen either child or mother.

"What did you call her?" he asked, more for something to say than for any other reason.

"Geraldine May," she replied, with a tender, sad smile, which was more like that of the girl he remembered than this terribly estranged woman. "I called her that to remind me of my own name. I am glad now that I did alter it—glad to think," holding the child tight against her breast, "that there will never be another Geraldine Hawthorne."

He turned aside, too pained to speak.

"There could never be another," then he said.

"God prove it may be impossible," she replied; and then swiftly changing the subject, as she always carefully did when it approached any personality that might try her fortitude, glancing round the room the while, and noticing the dead flowers still remaining in the glasses,—“I had it all ready, you see.”

It was the first actual allusion she had made to that terrible day of his return, or of what had preceded it, and he was at a loss what to reply.

"Come away," he said hastily, "out of this place; it stifles me."

"It is memory—memory," she said absently, following him, but still gazing forlornly about her, cutting in for ever on her heart the outlines of the room that had been her home. Once more in the outer apartment, she moved straight across it with that same quiet

sleep-walker's step. It was evident she had quite forgotten Philip's presence, and was passing away out of his life for ever, as he realised with a sharp pang, without one single word or thought even.

"Geraldine!" he called, and there was a shadow of reproof in his tone.

At the sound of her name she paused irresolutely, and half turned her head, with something of her girlhood in the manner in which she came back from her dream. But her girlhood's dreams under the old apple-trees, with the afternoon sun shining through the branches overhead, had never left her eyes dim and her cheeks white, as this one had done.

She roused herself, however, though she did not turn back or hold out her hand. Her voice was soft and gentle, as she said, "Farewell, Mr. Honeywood. I owe you much. I cannot hope to repay you here for all you have done for me. By-and-by——" But her voice was shaking, so she hesitated—only looked at him, and in those wistful eyes, those quivering lips, he read all that the dumb look meant. The grief, the tragedy, must rest between them, but neither must break the silence that enfolded it; only—— She read and comprehended his sympathy, which she only feared to hear put into words.

He respected the silence, therefore, and held out his hand. This time she took it in her left, clasping the baby closer to her all the while; but as her fingers rested in his, she murmured, as if apologetically, "'Tis for the last time."

"I trust not," he answered, scarce knowing what he said, only feeling the mute passion of her farewell

—the suffering which must look forth for ever from her eyes.

“Yes,” she said softly; “the next time we meet we shall be on the other side of death.”

“Geraldine!” he cried, laying a detaining hand on her cloak as she turned away, “stay! Ah, do not go like this! At the least,” as she hesitated, “tell me something. You are not going alone?”

“No, no,” quickly, as if touched with his distress; “do not fear for me. Some one,” after a pause, “is going with me.”

“Who is it? Tell me at least that,” still retaining his hold of her cloak; “let, at the least, the misery of uncertainty be spared me.”

“It is some one,” in a low voice, “who will be careful of me. He told me once,” irrelevantly, “‘there were surer means than an assassin’s knife;’ and he has found them; ‘and that my pride,’” with a wan smile, “‘should be humbled.’” Then before Captain Honeywood could interrupt and question: “No need to fear,” a little red dyeing her cheeks, and her eyes shifting and drooping under the terrible anxiety of his. Then suddenly changing her tone, and speaking quickly and defiantly, a red spot burning luridly on either cheek: “What is it to you? You are a great person, and might get into trouble were it known that you held intercourse with—*traitors!*” There was a breathless pause before the word, but then it came forth clearly enough.

“*Traitors!*” he repeated passionately.

“We are one,” she replied.

“Yes,” he began vaguely, not knowing what to say.

“And I would not have it otherwise,” she inter-

posed feverishly, laying her face against the infant's soft cheek; "I would not have it otherwise—not even now!"

The tears were standing thick in Philip Honeywood's eyes; so dim were they, that it was through a mist he saw the door open, and the tall dark figure drift away into the darkness outside, and be swallowed up in it.

CHAPTER XX.

"SWEETEST EYES WERE EVER SEEN."

"Go—be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they bring thee from heaven;
Of my grief—judge the length of the sword by the sheath,
By the *silence* of life, more pathetic than death."

IN the brilliantly lighted room of an inn, in a small town called Tryon, not far from Ticonderoga, a group, consisting of about a dozen officers in uniform, was seated round a table. Dinner was over, only just over, however, for glasses half filled with wine shone red in the soft light of many candles.

"It grows very warm," said a tall, slim youth; "would it not be as well to open a window?" half rising as he spoke. "Holloa, Calverley!" pausing as he crossed the room, "what is the matter? You look as dull as if you had seen a ghost!"

Before the man addressed had time to reply, the man by whom he was seated interposed. "Hold your foolish tongue, Hammond; it grows as long as your body, which, let me observe, has lengthened so since you set sail from England, that I fear, should we ever take you back, your mother will fail to recognise you. And as to ghosts, they are not visitors commonly seen in a barrack-room. But it grows late," glancing at the clock, "and warm, as you observed, so I think I shall be off. Calverley, will you walk with me as far as our paths lie together?"

Captain Calverley rose with a curt word of ac-

quiescence, and he and his companion turned away together.

"Now that those two kill-joys have departed," said the boy Hammond, as the door closed behind them, "let us make merry," seating himself as he spoke. "Colonel Oliver is small fun always; and as to that turncoat——"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, lad," said a neighbour, gently. "Captain Calverley did, unfortunately, at one portion of his career join with those rebels against King George; he now——"

"Rather a lengthened portion of his career," interrupted another, drily, "seeing that——"

"It is better to see your faults late than not at all," interposed another; and then they all laughed, and emptied their glasses, and refilled them, and made merry in a fashion that was pleasing to Lieutenant Hammond at least.

For long on into the small hours of the night, the sounds of laughing, talking, and occasionally a cheerful song, rang out into the stillness.

Meanwhile, under the calm starlit sky, through the quiet summer evening, the two elder men paced down the silent street side by side. Colonel Oliver ventured a word now and then, but not often. He was not always sure of his companion, and thought it as well, perhaps, to note his outgoings and incomings as much as was possible, in a careless, apparently unobservant way. But he was well worth a little trouble,—a good man to have withdrawn from the ways of error, one whose conversion should eventually stand his converter in good stead; in addition to all this, he rather liked him. Himself a good soldier, he saw and appreciated

the soldierly qualities in the new-comer, recognised his power over others, and the genius of a certain sort that he possessed, and was not averse to doing him a good turn in those future good days that were coming—days when, this rebellion a thing of the past, there should be many a plum to be offered those who had earned such reward.

“He is a good soldier,” he was thinking now, as he walked silently beside him, “only unsociable; and under the circumstances, that, perchance, is natural enough, and he has had scarce time yet to learn to feel at home.” And so thinking, spoke aloud: “I expect we will have work to do before long.”

Ralph Calverley started. “What makes you think so? Have you any news?”

“Nothing decided, but I was going to add, that this barrack-life is not the one to suit you. Hard knocks are more in your line, eh? Well, the time will come,—you will get your chance; and having got it, never fear but what better times are in store for you. No danger of being overlooked; with us, good men soon fight their way to the front. Our head men are veterans, who do not fear rivalry, and are swift to recognise merit—and reward it.”

There was just the slightest tinge of *intention* in the last part of Colonel Oliver’s speech, but by no outward sign did Captain Calverley show that it affected him—at least not in the way of annoying him.

“Hopeful words, Colonel,” he said, pausing. “May your prophecies come true,—you cannot desire it more ardently than I do. Here we are at the ‘King George,’

so I will bid you good-night. I hope you find your landlord as obliging as mine?"

"Perchance not quite," retorted the elder man, with a twinkle in his eyes, "but I think my landlady is fairer." And then with a nodded "Good-night" strolled on.

Left alone, Captain Calverley entered the narrow passage of the inn, and made his way at once up the small steep staircase, and without heeding, or indeed hearing, a quick impatient woman's voice, which called his name from below, turned the handle of a door in front of him, and entering, found himself in a fair-sized room, lit in dim uncomfortable fashion by two tall candles, that cast weird shadows about the apartment, and revealed to him the figure of a woman seated in a straight-backed antique chair. She was sitting very upright, and quite motionless. The heavy cloak had been unfastened at the throat, and had fallen back, and was trailing on the floor about her. Her fair hair, disordered by her hood, gleamed now and again as the light fell upon it, as she sat thus with bent head, and white hands folded on her lap.

"Geraldine!" he cried, hoarsely.

At the sound of her name, at the click of the lock, she lifted up her eyes, to see the tall figure standing in the doorway, in all its bravery of scarlet and gold,—the uniform she had learnt to hate in these past years,—but she looked steadily past it, with an effort, to the worn face above it, and rose to her feet, then made a step towards him, as he did not move.

"Yes, it is I,—your wife."

There might have been the slightest note of warn-

ing conveyed by the last word. It was as husband and wife they were to meet. They were standing close together now, and she laid her hand gently on his.

"Are you not glad to see me?" she asked wistfully, striving to put her arm about his neck. "Do you not care? It is so long since I saw you! Are you not glad to have me back?"

He pushed her almost fiercely away from him; then taking her hands in his, and speaking more roughly than she had ever heard him speak: "Listen," he said; "you do not know what you have done. You could never bear it. Before heaven," his voice falling suddenly, and a dark red flush dyeing his cheek, "I meant you to remain there." And then, suddenly reverting to his first manner of speech, and letting her hands fall, he added somewhat defiantly, though his eyes did not meet hers, "There is nothing to be said."

"No," she replied, simply and steadily, "of a surety, there is nothing to be said; only," timidly, "you will bid me welcome, and tell me that you are glad to see me." She lifted her white face and haggard tired eyes to his as she spoke.

There was no reply. With a sudden movement Ralph strode across the room, and flinging himself down in a chair, laid his arms on the table, and burying his face in them, burst into tears.

There was something so terrifying in those deep sobs, and the vision of proud, reserved Ralph Calverley so utterly unmanned, that for a moment Geraldine remained where he had left her, in the middle of the room, as if frozen to the ground. But only for a moment. Kneeling down beside him, with her

hands clasping the hated red of his uniform, she essayed to think of some words that might carry comfort with them.

"Ralph! Ralph!" she cried, "what is it? Do not weep, I pray of you. After all, whatever happens, I have you yet. Is not it something to be back with you once more?"

"I declare," he said, suddenly raising his head, and looking down at her as she knelt, all wearied, with roughened hair, at his feet,—ah, how unlike the stately Geraldine Hawthorne of old days!—"I declare," vehemently, "that I thought you would just curse me, and put me out of your life. That that would be all!"

"Ah, Ralph," she said softly, "and could you bear to think that?" It was the first reproachful word she had uttered. And then, after a second's pause, "I had to come—I could not live without you."

"You love me still?" he asked quietly, but his hands were trembling, and two scorching tears stood in his dark eyes.

"I gave you all my love so long ago that I cannot take it back now; it is too late, even if I wished it."

He gave a quick sigh, that might have been relief or pain; then he took her two hands almost reverently in his, and raised her to her feet, and with an arm about her, which drew her closer to him, "Then you will kiss me?" he said, still in that same half-defiant, half-ashamed voice.

For all answer, she stooped her head and kissed him, clasping her arms about his neck, and smoothing his dark hair with soft hands, the while she murmured tender loving words. "I only ask to stay with you," she said; "you surely do not fear me—fear that I

should hurt you? To love you, and to know that I have your love still, that is all I need; I am your wife, that is all you must remember, and"—the faintest shell-like tint of pink in her white cheeks—"the mother of your child."

There was a question in his eyes, though he did not speak.

She crossed the room, and moving a shawl off the couch, returned to his side with the baby in her arms. For a moment he looked with interest on the flushed sleeping face, then his glance wandered to that of the mother bent over it. She looked timidly from it to him, her cheeks flushing a little, as if fearing what his first words might be,—and for the moment, in the uncertain light, and with that half-sad smile on her lips, she looked more like the girl he knew first. With a sudden impulse he stretched out his arms and drew her closely to him, holding wife and child in a quick passionate embrace.

"You will never leave me?" he said, low in her ear.

"Never, never," she replied. "Are you not all that I have left?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GOLDEN YEARS HAVE FLED.

“There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet,—
There was no bliss drew nigh to her,
That she might run to greet.”

FROM that day forward no word passed the lips of husband or wife, to show that either of them felt the wide blank that lay between the old life and the new.

Geraldine moved about, tall and stately, but the smile that was always rare never came now, and there was a something—a faint shadow of the anguish, that only Philip Honeywood had seen darken her eyes—about her, that told of something that had withered in her life, that this world might never hope to see bloom again. There was nothing left her but her love, as she had said the day of her return; but if this were indeed so, she never said so much again. She went about her daily tasks quietly, and showed but rarely abroad, and then only on necessary business. At other times she sat in the low window of her room at the “King George”—for the few days they remained in Tryon—needlework in hand, or playing with her child. She grew very matronly-looking as the time passed. The large full nature, which had always promised such plenteousness of tenderness, had ripened in the burning heat under which it had passed, and in the sweet mouth and soft eyes one read little else

now but love. If she suffered cut off from home and kindred, it was when she was alone, for none saw her, none knew her prayers, her tears; none knew how her feet ached, or even if they ached, as she trod the valley of humiliation,—none, perhaps, save baby May—held tight in her arms on those lonely nights when Ralph was far away on business, of which, on his return, he did not talk to her—and “He who neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

Day by day passed, month by month, and she grew used, if not reconciled, to her lot. She had grown used to the many silent hours of the day, with the child for all companionship, and to the sudden passionate bursts of tenderness on her husband’s part, followed by a cold silence, in which his eyes rarely met hers, and which would sometimes last for days.

The time was over now when he was a subordinate, slightly feared and doubted by his fellows—*that* she knew, though she asked no questions and he told her naught. He had been tried and proved, and not found wanting on many and many an occasion; and the uniform, whose newness used to cause her such a pang of pain, had lost its gloss, and grown old and shabby—all its gay glitter dull and tarnished.

She had learned to grow accustomed to the sudden changes from place to place, always with the same companions. John Hammond’s boyish pleasant face had grown a familiar feature in her life, and Colonel Oliver’s prim old-world courtesy, whenever his path came across hers, had ceased to irritate and wound her. She no longer paled and shrank away with trembling lips when she saw the scarlet of his uniform, but narrowed her life as much as might be, until its

influence was scarcely felt beyond the slender circle of home. But there it was felt, if nowhere else; the flame seemed to burn all the brighter and purer from the contracted limits that it was allowed.

All their movements always tended to lead them farther and farther from home, and home associations; perhaps those in authority had a certain motive in this—perhaps it was pure chance. It had not always been her fate to accompany her husband; for the greater part of the time she and the baby had remained in Philadelphia, and thither her husband and his companions had returned as often as it had been possible. The room where she lived was let to her by a pleasant old woman, who occasionally, when Ralph was longer absent than usual, would mount the stairs to her lodger's room, and help to beguile the long evening hours with stories of things she had seen and heard in the eventful fifty years of her life. She was an Englishwoman by birth, but her father had been an American, and she had a tender sympathy with those whom she vaguely denominated "the other side;" and Geraldine would listen with eager interest, her eyes sparkling for the time being, and would lead her on to tell all she knew, in a manner that charmed old Mistress Greene. For next to news came memory, and her own store had been so drawn upon in all these months, that a fresh draught from another's cup seemed to bring new life.

There were moments when the longing to hear, if it were but the names of those amongst whom she had lived, to learn what part they were taking in the struggle that was growing fiercer day by day; times when this longing grew strong as fever, and it was all

she could do not to cry aloud the words that were for ever in her heart. But she did not. She rose and lifted the sleeping child, and kissed it; or if he—her husband—were there, threw her arms about his neck, in a sudden passionate embrace, and thus strove to be thankful for what she had saved out of the wreck.

“And after all, it was my own doing,” she would strive to think. “He left me quite alone to make my choice, and I made it.”

Only once in all this long weary time, some lucky chance had thrown into Mistress Greene’s hands a “rebel” newspaper, as she termed it, but which she diligently perused nevertheless, and afterwards gave to her lodger to amuse her. It was evening when she brought it up-stairs; Captain Calverley was out, and directly the door had closed behind the old lady, Geraldine, with trembling fingers, and eyes of a sudden grown blurred and dim with tears, glanced up and down the page to see if perchance there might be a name she knew.

Yes; her eye was immediately caught by the large type which headed a certain paragraph—“Daring exploit of Colonel Honeywood!” and under this heading there was a brief account of how one of his own men, Josiah Sumner by name, had been captured with several others; but that by the personal bravery of their commander, the said Colonel Honeywood, the fortunes of the day had been turned just when all seemed lost, and the captors had been obliged to flee, leaving their prisoners behind them.

“Thank God, Pen, for that,” Geraldine said softly;

“and oh, how thankful I am to know that so lately they were alive!”

She was still standing thus, a tender smile parting her lips, as she strove to conjure up the scene, and the many old faces the scene recalled, when the door was hastily opened, and Ralph Calverley entered the room.

“Geraldine,” he said quickly, noting the flushed cheeks and the unaccustomed tears in the grey eyes, “what is it?” moving hastily to her side.

She started and roused herself, brushing away the tears with her hand, and then quietly, though she steadied her voice with difficulty—“No, do not fear; it is but a small thing. It was”—hesitatingly—“some news.”

“News,” he repeated uneasily; “who brought it? Not evil news, I trust?” taking her hand in his.

“No, *good* news,” she replied, trying to smile; “it has been so long,” a little disconnectedly—and then stopping herself, and touching the paper, “it was in this.”

He leaned down and read the name, and having done so, walked quickly away to the other end of the room, and stood looking out into the night.

“Ralph,” she said presently, “would you care to look at it?”

He did not answer at once, and then, without turning his head, “Burn it,” he said.

Without a word she lifted the sheet, which was still in her hand, and held it in the flame of the candle till it was entirely destroyed. All the time it was burning, as in a vision she saw the girl, Geraldine Hawthorne, young and fair, with no shadow to dim

her eyes in present or past, reading in the darkening kitchen of Endicot Farm, a paragraph which told much the same story of another; and now—— When the ashes lay in a little brown heap on the table, she gave a deep gasping sigh, and sat down.

The sigh was heard all through the room—it was so weary, so heart-sick. Ralph Calverley turned round, and in silence leaning over her, kissed her, but he said nothing.

Only on one other occasion did the past rise up for a moment, and cast a shadow over the present. That was the first time on which Captain Calverley received orders to set forth on a certain expedition, the command of which was intrusted to him. Though not a very important thing of itself, he knew that by his success or failure *he* would hereafter stand or fall, and the thought excited him to a certain degree. There was a fire in his eyes as he entered the room where his wife was awaiting him, which told her something important had happened: and a dread presentiment whispered what it was.

She had always, poor wife, so hoped that he would remain an unimportant unit, and so pass unobserved. Ambition she had none; only to be forgotten, that was the one hope not quite dead in her. He was going away, he told her, and might be absent some time—nothing else; but she noticed, as she sat at work with the child crawling on the floor at her feet, how, as he moved about, though the line of care between his brows, which was always there now, did not relax, yet that his eyes had lost somewhat of the settled gloom they had worn lately, and that even on his dark cheek there was a slight flush of excitement. Lifting her

eyes once furtively,—he had ceased pacing up and down now, and was seated at the table, pen in hand,—lifting her eyes, she met his fixed upon her, with something in their expression she could not translate—a something that made her rise to her feet, dropping her needlework as she did so, and move to his side, with a sudden tender caress.

He lifted his hand, and took in it the one that rested on his shoulder, drawing her down till her soft cheek rested against his.

“I am grieved to leave you, Geraldine. I fear you will find it very lonely.”

“I have the child,” she answered softly, kissing him. “Do you think”—the faintest tremble in her tones—“you will be away for long?”

“I trust not; but one can never tell.”

She shivered then: a cold wind seemed to sweep through the room. Other partings in old times, in other years,—another world was it not?—came to her remembrance, when bidding him farewell; she had thought of the dread possibility that for ever hangs about a soldier’s life.

Then that other Geraldine, whom she was looking back upon now, though she had feared, had felt that life was not everything,—so much would remain hers, even should the summons go forth before they met again. But to this Geraldine, what would remain? “Ah, Ralph, Ralph!” she cried, sinking down on her knees, and clasping her hands about his arm, “come back to me. My courage has all gone. Your life—your life—that is all I pray for. Come back to my love.” The tears were in her eyes, but with an effort she checked their falling. “Forgive me,” she went on,

burying her face in the hands that rested on his sleeve, "I grow a coward. But oh, Ralph," her voice falling, "remember I have nothing else in all the world to pray for, or care for, excepting your life."

Did he understand the pitiful meaning of those words? Did he read between the lines, the meaning that only that moment of terror—terror of a possible desolate future—could have induced her to betray? Did he feel the bitterness of the cry that lamented over the wreck, out of which only his life had been saved? He made no sign if it were so, but he laid his hand gently, caressingly on the downbent golden head, on which, alas! many and many a grey hair now showed, and "Would you indeed lose so much in losing me?" he asked at length.

"Everything," she replied softly. And he surely knew it, for had not he himself deprived her of all else in life that she held dear?

"I must be going, Geraldine," he said, when the silence had remained long unbroken, save for the soft murmurs of the baby, as it played by its mother's chair. "We leave early, and I promised to return, so as to see Colonel Oliver ere we started."

He rose, and Geraldine also; and when, ten minutes later, having kissed his wife and the little May, he crossed the small room, and turned back with a gesture of farewell in the doorway, the past seemed the reality, this the dream; and in Geraldine's eyes he was once more the hero of her girlish days—he seemed, indeed, to have regained something of the proud look and steady gaze of which these last months had deprived him.

She watched him for a moment, a tender sad smile

curving her sweet mouth; then, ere he crossed the threshold, with something that sounded like a cry of horror, she moved hastily to his side. "Oh, Ralph," her words coming quick and unsteady, and her eyes darkening with swift passion,—“oh, Ralph, not with this,” touching, as she spoke, the sword that hung by his side.

For one moment he seemed scarcely to understand her; then he unfastened it, and placed the sword which she herself had first fastened on, in her hands, whilst a red flush mounted slowly to his cheeks, as in silence he turned away.

But she detained him, laying her hand on his arm. "Kiss me," she panted; and he stooped and kissed her. Then the door closed, and he was gone.

Left alone, she crossed over to the window, and stood there gazing out, the weapon in her hands.

Standing thus, in her black dress, the evening light turning to gold the brightness of her hair, the cross-handled sword in her two hands, she might have been taken for Joan of Arc, vowing her life to her country. And if the "Maid of Orleans" heard voices, so did Geraldine Calverley, only her voices spoke out of the past, not the future. With tear-dimmed eyes she read those words, "from friends," and to her aching heart she held it close, laying her cheek against the cold scabbard, and recalling, as she did so, that proud, joyful, never-to-be-forgotten day, when she had witnessed its presentation—the gift of a people's love. The shouts still echoed in her ears as she stood thus with it in her hands; the words, that were engraved upon her heart, were shining before her eyes—"fight for us;" and he was about——

"Oh, heaven, help me!" and down on the ground, at her feet, slipped the sword with a terrible clatter—a clatter which roused the child, who raised its voice in a sharp cry, that brought the mother to its side.

"Ah, baby, baby!" she sighed, clasping its little soft cheek close against her aching heart, "our allegiance is terribly divided, is it not? But we must forget everything," pacing softly back and forth to soothe the tired child; "forget everything—home, kindred, friends,—everything but his love."

Since that day many weeks and months had passed. The sword "~~f~~rom ~~f~~riends" was hidden safely away in a chest, with two or three other treasures that had had part in the youth of Geraldine Hawthorne. But they were never looked at—they were buried safely away out of sight, with that dead, long-buried past.

CHAPTER XXII.

AUTRES PAYS, AUTRES MŒURS.

“Ah, the might of the strength that dwells apart,
In the deep, deep cells of a woman’s heart.”

PHILADELPHIA had, in its turn, been evacuated by the English, and the tide of war had latterly drifted southward; and it was in Wilmington that Geraldine had lately found a temporary abode, and it was there she remained during all Captain Calverley’s absences, making in two dull rooms her home.

The flight of years was marked, so it now seemed to her, only by the little pencil-lines upon the wall, that she drew month by month, to note the increasing inches, up to which reached the blond head of the child.

She was kneeling one evening in late August 1781, four years since she had bidden adieu to her old life, holding it still with white, steady hands, the evening sunlight wrapping her in a flame of gold, and making the child, who was facing the window, blink in the yellow light.

“Quite still, darling—for one second,” lifting a pencil as she spoke, and with the other hand steadying the tiny, tottering figure. “Ah, here is father,” without turning her head, as a hand was laid on the handle. “Come, Ralph, come and see how she has grown.”

It was a pretty picture. Ralph Calverley paused in the doorway a moment to observe it. Then moving to her side, and laying his hand caressingly on the mother's shoulder, whilst he watched with tender pride as the child raised its fair head and struggled to raise itself on the points of its feet.

"Yes, it grows apace, Geraldine, and more like you, so it appears to me, every day."

"Do you think so?" somewhat wistfully. "Now, to me, it seems her eyes grow darker, and liker to yours, so that I hoped—— But it is as well," she said softly, as she rose to her feet, "that we should see each other in her."

Her husband made no answer, but began pacing back and forth, as was his habit when troubled or perplexed. At length, "Geraldine," he called, pausing by the window; and at the word, Geraldine ceased playing with the little one, and crossed to his side.

"What is it, Ralph?" standing in front of him, an ill-defined uneasiness at her heart. And as he did not immediately reply, "Ralph," laying two trembling hands on his, "there is nothing wrong, is there?"

He took her hands in his as he answered, "No, no," soothingly, noting how pale her cheeks had grown.

But his eyes did not rest long on her face; they fell almost immediately on to the hands he still held. And it was almost a minute before he said, "I have a request to make."

"It must be something very important," she answered, in would-be light tones; but her eyes were anxious still.

"It is," he answered quietly. "It is something I

fear much you will dislike doing. I am the bearer of an invitation to you. Colonel Oliver asks you to dine with us to-morrow night. It is the last time, you know, that we shall all be together."

He did not look at her as he spoke, and there was a second's silence, in which he felt the hands he held clasp his tighter, as though in sudden pain. He kept his eyes bent upon them, till she said—"Do *you* wish it, Ralph?"

"Yes," he answered; but his voice was low, and she fancied a little unsteady.

"If you wish it," she said, stooping her head and kissing the hand that held hers, "that is enough for me."

Nothing more was said, and Geraldine returned to her play with the child. But afterwards, when she was alone, standing by the window looking down into the dark street, she wrung her hands together, as if in pain. "Oh, I would that he had not asked me!" she said aloud, "for it will be almost more than I can bear. And yet I could not refuse! His last day with me; and he so seldom asks anything of me, that I could not find it in my heart to say 'No.' But oh, Ralph, I think if you could see into my heart, and learn what it cost me to say 'Yes,' you would comprehend how I love you!" Then she lifted her head to the blue vault above, but her eyes were dimmed, so that the stars shone mistily. But tears were unaccustomed visitors, and she dashed them hastily away. She never wept now,—and if tears ever came, they scorched, they did not relieve. Tears do not strengthen, and when all one's strength is needed to accomplish

the task life has set us, they are the first things to be avoided.

"Do you know yet where you will go the day after to-morrow," Geraldine asked him timidly that evening.

And when her husband answered, "Yorktown is my final destination," she gave a sigh of relief.

Yorktown was very far away from home. That was the meaning of the sigh, but she did not translate it, and no explanation was asked. Perhaps Captain Calverley did not hear it. Never since—ah, so long ago! had Geraldine known him so apparently content. The command he had craved for so long had been given him—the rank of Colonel, and in the most flattering manner, every word telling him of the high honour and esteem in which he was held. And he gloried in it; it required all his natural reticence to prevent him rejoicing in Geraldine's presence. But something always did prevent him doing that—a something, perhaps, that had been burnt into the grey eyes, that once were only tender and loving.

Once having promised, Geraldine did not permit herself to contemplate beforehand the possible disagreeables of the coming entertainment; and when her husband came to seek her the following evening, he found her ready, awaiting him.

She was standing by the window, her hands clasped, her face lifted, with the slightest, tenderest flush upon it; and as she stood thus, for the moment he seemed to see the girl to whom he had told his love under the shadow of the apple-trees.

"Dreaming?" he said, laying his hand on her shoulder.

She turned her head at his touch, and for a moment rested her cheek against his hand; and then, "No, I do not dream now. Pen," with a sigh, "always told me I should wake up one day. I am wide awake now!" and she sighed again, but immediately afterwards flushed a little. Perhaps Pen's name, so seldom heard, so unconsciously used, had roused other memories, for with sudden haste she spoke again. "Are you satisfied, Ralph, with my appearance? You know my gowns are all so plain."

He looked at her, and then, "You have not a coloured gown, have you?" he asked.

"No, not one."

"Well, after all, it matters naught, and black becomes you mightily," kissing her. "Now fetch your cloak, we must start."

When she returned with it, he was standing where she had left him, and in his hand he held a delicate white rose.

"See," he said, holding it out, "I procured this for you this afternoon; would you," nervously, "care to wear it?"

She took the dainty blossom into her hand in silence, and moving over to the mirror, fastened it in amongst the delicate laces at her throat. Her hand was shaking as she did so, her lips trembling, so that for a second she could not frame a word of thanks; and it was only after her husband had called her twice, that she turned towards him, and when she did so, he saw the tears on her lashes that she would not permit to fall.

"What is it?" he asked, putting his arm about her, and speaking low and tenderly. "What is it? Do

you indeed so dislike the idea of accompanying me to-night?"

"No," in a tremulous whisper, touching the flower at her throat. "It is this."

"This?" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes, yes," bringing out the words with almost a sob. "It seems to speak to me of home."

He said nothing more, but folded her cloak carefully about her, and in silence they went forth into the still night.

So entirely had Geraldine lived in the innermost circle of her husband's life, contenting herself with that circle, and not seeking to intermeddle with what lay beyond it, that it was only on observing as she entered the small room at the inn which served as temporary dining-room, the deference with which his words were listened to, the courtesy and attention which met him, that she recognised the respect in which he was held by all.

The place of honour at dinner was hers by the side of Colonel Oliver; and though she honestly strove to forget the colour of his uniform, and only think of the kind words with which he tried to hit upon some passing topic that might interest her, yet she felt she was but a dull companion, and feared often, in the humility of her sore heart, that he must have repented the courtesy which had prompted him to ask Ralph Calverley to bring his wife to their farewell dinner.

"I was ever of a dull nature," she thought, somewhat bitterly; "and now," pressing her hands together, "of course, as I have nothing in common with any of them——" Then her eyes fell on her husband's scarlet coat, and she checked herself, with a scarcely

perceptible shiver. "It is my life," she thought; "there is no cause for my complaint; I have chosen it,"—and with an effort she brought her mind back to Colonel Oliver's efforts at conversation.

But if Colonel Oliver, an elderly gentleman, somewhat of an epicure into the bargain, had failed to observe his companion's flight of thought into regions far above, or at least beyond, the company among which she found herself, such was not the case with John Hammond. The unaccustomed vision of tall, fair-haired Mistress Calverley, in her black dress, with the delicate white rose fastened into the lace under the round curve of her chin, seemed to fascinate him. Perhaps the fascination would have been incomplete, though, had it not been for the forlorn droop of the lovely mouth, the frightened expression of the great grey eyes, as if awaiting some terror, some pain that was sure to come, sooner or later. But the long, and to Geraldine, at least, wearisome dinner, at length drew to a close; the wine was put upon the table, and a faint hope and wonder arose in her mind as to whether it would be permitted to her to retire into the smaller room, in which they had all sat and awaited the summons to dinner. The question was looking forth out of her eyes, as she sought her husband's glance, but his head was turned away; and whilst awaiting that his conversation should finish, Colonel Oliver, filling his own glass as he spoke, proposed that they should drink to the health and prosperity of "Colonel" Calverley, "good-luck on his expedition, and a speedy and safe return." "Fill Mistress Calverley's glass,"—turning to Geraldine's other neighbour, a grim silent man, who had not joined in the revelry

about him. Ere he had time to do so, Geraldine, of a sudden realising the full purport of the charged glasses and Colonel Oliver's words, made a swift movement, almost as if about to rise from her seat; she restrained herself, however, in time, and merely lifted her eyes with a quick look of such terrible passionate woe, that it must have taken years for them to learn to acquire. He on whom the look all innocently should have fallen, still had his face averted; he on whom it did fall, almost unconsciously rose to his feet, and answered it as if it had been an actual cry for help.

"I do not drink wine," was all young Hammond heard the soft voice say, as, before his purpose was fully realised, even by himself, he stood behind Geraldine's chair.

"Mistress Calverley grows wearied, sir," he said; "she finds it hot in here; I will take her into the other room."

He received no answer, except the quick grateful flash from Geraldine's tired eyes. In the clatter and noise of pushing back chairs and men rising to their feet, it may be doubted if their exit was even observed, saving by one pair of dark eyes; but if their owner saw, he gave no sign that it was so.

"Thank you, thank you," Geraldine said, as they stood in the small, quiet room, with its two candles burning tall and dim, and its unshuttered windows open into the still, starlit night. "It is quiet here," moving hastily towards the windows, as if to put as much distance as possible between her and the door they had just closed, and whence might be clearly heard issuing the loud voices of those within.

"Do not let me detain you, sir, I pray of you," as young Hammond moved along by her side. "It was somewhat hot in there; but here"—her lips were trembling a little—"I shall soon recover."

"If it would not annoy you, Mistress Calverley, I would rather wait here with you. It is, as you say, far pleasanter."

For a minute Geraldine made no reply. She was leaning on the iron bar placed across the window, letting the cool wind lift the soft hair on her forehead; and leaning forward thus, she turned her head to look at the tall, ungainly figure of the young man by her side,—at his red coat, his awkward movements, and then at his plain, kindly face. All this she contemplated ere speaking; and then, as if on a sudden recalling herself from a dream, "I beg your pardon," she said. "I am sorry," colouring a little, "but I fear I did not hear you. I was thinking—— Ah," clasping her hands together suddenly, "if you knew!"

"Do not mind me," Mr. Hammond said, standing beside her, a troubled expression on his honest face; "only if you would rather I went, say so."

"No, no; pray stay."

For a long time the silence remained unbroken, and then, suddenly, with no preface, "I wish I could tell you how sorry I was for you," Mr. Hammond began.

"No, I pray of you," Geraldine interrupted; her lips were trembling.

But he went on unheeding. "Till to-night I never guessed," and there paused, blushing and hesitating, with all a boy's shyness at having been betrayed into an awkward sentence, visible in his face.

"You must not pity me," Geraldine's grave voice said in the pause that followed. And after a while she added dreamily, her eyes on the stars overhead—"It was my own choice."

"Yours!" repeated young Hammond. His voice brought her back to the knowledge of him, and his presence.

"You cannot understand yet," she said softly; "but by-and-by you will comprehend it better, and perhaps pity me less. When you are married yourself, then you will surely pity me less."

"Or more," he said brusquely. "I am a boy, perhaps, Mistress Calverley, as you say, and love is a sealed book; but even I can comprehend what it would be to love, and be——"

"Hush!" she interrupted, the tones of her voice growing imperious, and her eyes darkening and dilating; "what are you about to say?" shrinking back from him as she spoke.

"Forgive me," he said humbly; "I was forgetting."

"Forgive *me*," Geraldine replied quickly. "I grow swift to take offence in these days, but I know you meant none. Only by-and-by, when you are much, much older," looking down from the terrible experiences which had converted her five-and-twenty years into a lifetime, "you will understand how nothing," clasping her hands tightly together, "nothing is unbearable, except"—a sigh—"except separation." No further words passed between them for a little while, then Geraldine roused herself and asked: "You go with him—is it not so?"

"Yes; Calverley and I go together: all the others are to go to Charlestown with Colonel Oliver."

“And how long——” Perhaps she did not exactly know how to shape her question, or perhaps thoughts overwhelmed her, of all that that “How long” might include; for she paused there, with face averted, as if awaiting a reply.

“It depends on many circumstances how long we remain absent,” he replied, guessing the purport of her unfinished question. “If we have luck, of course,” warming to his theme, “and come across the enemy, as we expect and hope, then we shall be back before you will have time to miss us, covered with glory; or if not, you will hear of us in Yorktown. Why, Mistress Calverley,” catching a glimpse of a white face, “you have surely been a soldier’s wife too long to know fear?”

“Fear!” she repeated, raising her eyes to his, and steadying her trembling lips with difficulty—“no, I do not fear. But cannot you comprehend,” passionately, “that even *glory*,” with a scornful stress on the word, most unlike her usual soft tones, “may be too dearly purchased? Ah! what am I saying?” her voice changing. “Not what I would, of that I am certain. Good-luck go with you, Mr. Hammond; wherever you are, I will never forget to pray for your welfare.”

“To have won a place in your memory is worth a great deal to me,—and I hope,” blushing in a boyish, uncomfortable fashion, “that if I do well in the coming time, you will not, because of other things”—vaguely—“grudge me my success.”

“It is your duty,” she said softly. “A man can do no more than be faithful to his post. And having known you for so long, it is at your post that I shall

always think of you. I do not think that *you* will fail."

Those words came back to John Hammond not so long afterwards, when, in dire straits, he searched his brain for a comforting thought. And his honest eyes lightened, as across his troubled mind came the remembrance of the grave woman's face, with its sad eyes, and the low full voice that had said, "I do not think that you will fail."

They were quiet for a while, and then another burst of cheering through the closed doors jarred upon the stillness.

"Mr. Hammond," said Geraldine, "do you think that Colonel Oliver would take it ill on my part if I were to return home now? It is growing late, and they may sit long over their wine. I would not for anything," flushing a little, "go yet awhile, if you think that they will expect to find me here by-and-by."

"I think, Mistress Calverley, that probably, in view of to-morrow's parting, they will stay late yonder; so, if you will it, I will go and tell your husband that you are growing wearied."

"Thank you, it would perhaps be as well."

In a few minutes Mr. Hammond returned.

"I have told Colonel Calverley that I am about to take you home, because you are tired. And it is as well," he added, "for there is no likelihood of their finishing yet awhile."

"But I did not mean you to go with me; indeed, I fear, as it is, that I am keeping you from your comrades. The street is quite quiet, as you see, and it is but a few steps to the inn. Do not let me trouble you, I pray of you," as, unheeding of her remon-

stances, Mr. Hammond continued wrapping her cloak about her.

"Trouble!" he repeated; and then, half shyly, "if you do not object I should much like it. We leave to-morrow; it may be a long time before we meet again."

"Oh, I pray not," Geraldine said, half under her breath; but it was not of John Hammond she was thinking.

It was still pleasant out under the blue skies, where the stars were shining steadily; and they sauntered slowly homewards, both in their different ways feeling the beauty of the calm night, and for a long time no words passed between them. But as they walked, young Hammond's tongue was loosed, and he began to tell Geraldine of his home far away beyond the sea,—of his sisters, and his mother. And Geraldine listened in grave sympathy, even when he strayed away from the past, to the future struggle, in which he was to win his spurs. Her heart was not sore as she listened to the confident boyish voice, foretelling all he was to accomplish—the honour he was to have won, when he should return to that English home; it did not ache and throb, as she had often known it do with far less provocation. Was it possible, she marvelled, that she was forgetting those with whom her life had once been bound up?—that the outcome of the fierce tribulation through which she had passed would ever be forgetfulness? Ah no! not that,—rather anything than that! He to whom she was listening was not an enemy, but one who had shown himself her friend to-night—a boy to whom home and mother were sacred words, and who had

turned to her, as he might have done to an elder sister, seeking for sympathy. And was it for her, because of the terrible entanglements of her life, to refuse it? Assuredly no? It is safer to do the kind act, say the kind word, than to question too closely on whom the kindness may fall. But all the time she listened and sympathised, an undercurrent that made her eyes grow misty now and then with tears, kept running through her mind, and bringing before her, though in a vague, uncertain fashion, other days that had passed long, long long ago, in another life, when to a little country village a man and his friend had come together; and how the friend had talked, in youthful, buoyant fashion, of the great things they two were to accomplish later on together. "Together!" She furtively raised her hand to brush away a tear, and having done so, perceived that they were standing at the door of the house where she lived.

"Farewell, Mr. Hammond," holding out her hand. "I shall never forget how kind you have been to me. I shall pray for your welfare, and shall hope," with a faint shadow of a smile, "that there may be no fighting, and that you may return at no distant day."

"Ah no, Mistress Calverley, you must not say that—that is not wishing for me the chance to distinguish myself."

"It is allowed to women," she replied, "to be afraid of war, is it not? Besides, it is my husband who is going with you."

"We will take care of ourselves," he said lightly. "Farewell," and so turned away down the silent street, weaving hopes and fancies as he walked, pitying also,

in honest boyish fashion, the woman from whom he had just parted.

"How can they esteem her cold and stiff?" he wondered. "Why, she is the sweetest, gentlest woman I ever saw! She keeps apart from us, of course, but that is because her heart is not with us." And even to his slow-working brain some dim perception was borne, as he paced the streets homewards, of the pain and grief she from whom he had parted must have known.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS.

“So much the leaded dice of war,
Do make, or mar, of character.”

HAVING satisfied herself that the child slept soundly, and exchanged her black gown for a loose wrapper, Geraldine sat down, and with hands folded in her lap, set herself to think out something that was perplexing her. Geraldine Calverley's mind was of a slow-working order, and always would be so; but whatever there had been dreamy and unpractical about her, had all been long ago burnt up in the scorching fire of sorrow and pain she had known. So, though the scent of the crushed white rose, which she still held in her hand, brought back to her shadowy reminders of the garden at the Farm, yet from thence her mind did not wander off into one of those vague dreams, as it had been wont to do in old days, but instead she essayed to work out the problem that was troubling her. Long, long, she waited thus. The candle burnt down into the socket, and went out unnoticed; there was even a cold grey light and chill in the air, which foretold the dawn, ere the door was opened to admit her husband.

At the sight of the white still figure, Colonel Calverley paused, and then, “What is it?” he questioned, closing the door quickly as he spoke. “Are

you ill, Dinie, or in trouble?" His words seemed to rouse her, and she rose to her feet, looking wan and weary in the dim light.

"Ralph," she began, making a few steps towards him, and then standing still, with clasped hands, "I have been waiting all these hours to speak to you,—striving all the while to determine whether it is right or wrong to speak."

"What is it?" he questioned, but though he spoke quietly there was a momentary anxiety in his dark eyes. He held out his hand, so saying, as if to draw her towards him; but not heeding the movement, she remained where she was, a few paces off.

"Ralph, you will believe me, will you not, when I say that I am striving to do right? You could not think," somewhat wistfully, "that I would willingly say anything that might hurt you?" There was no answer, but neither did he move away; he stood quite still, as if expecting her to continue. "I have been thinking for hours," she went on, "that perhaps, after all, it is cowardice that keeps me silent. I dare not," passionately, "risk losing your love! But, O Ralph! it seems to me that I must say one word of warning. Are you thinking well of what you are about to do? To-morrow," clasping her hands tightly together, "you are going away, and I dare not ask whither, or wherefore! O Ralph! dear Ralph!" moving nearer to him, and laying her hands about his arm, "our *past* we have in common; you cannot have forgotten,"—her words coming quick and brokenly, as she noted the averted eyes and lowering brow—"it was everything to you once, as it was to me. Do you ever think what it would be to meet your old life face to face? Your

soldiers who loved you,—your countrymen,—your friend!” she paused; her breath came in quick gasps, her whole form was trembling with passion. Never had he seen her so moved; but then he had not seen her the day “Calverley’s Horse” marched into Boston, with a stranger at their head. “Forgive me,” she panted, in a terrified voice, in the silence that ensued. “Do anything, say anything, but I cannot forfeit your love. I only spoke because it seemed wrong to keep silence.”

Still he did not answer, only shook off her hand from his arm, and walking across to the casement, flung it open and gazed abroad, on to the chill early dawn, as if he found the atmosphere of the small room stifling. For a moment she remained where he had left her, and then she moved to his side.

“Ralph,” touching his arm, and speaking low and tenderly, all the passion gone out of her voice; “Ralph, forgive me—do not turn away from me. Forget everything I have said—blot it out from your memory; remember only that I am your wife.” The tears were in her eyes, and Ralph Calverley, turning his head, seeing the white tired face and misty eyes, felt a sudden pang of compunction, or at least so it seemed from his words.

“You have won the right to say what you please,” he said, half grudgingly; but he threw his arm about her as he spoke. “And as for me, Geraldine,” kissing her passionately, “contrary words will not dig up my love,—it is rooted too deep for that.”

So Geraldine’s aching heart was fain to rest content with that love.

Three hours later, when Colonel Calverley, after a brief rest, a necessary preparation for the day's work, again entered the little sitting-room, Geraldine still sat where he had parted from her, was still gazing forlornly forth into the street. All those weary hours she had been going over and over the old battle-field, trying to determine whether she had done well to speak.

"For I did no good," and with a shiver, "I might have done such terrible harm! But not knowingly—I meant well, heaven knows! Ah, Ralph!" as his hand resting on her shoulder startled her, and raising her eyes to his, "you know that I meant well. Of a sudden," rising and lowering her voice,—“of a sudden it seemed to me that perhaps it was cowardice that kept me silent.”

His eyes, haggard and wearied, did not look into hers, and he drew her head against his breast, as if to avoid meeting those raised to him, whilst softly and caressingly he smoothed the roughened fair hair.

"It was not cowardice;" then he said sullenly, "I know you better than that." Then with sudden passion, "Geraldine! if only——" and there paused. It was the first time in all the years of his life that that little word, with its suggestion of possible regret, had ever passed his lips, and Geraldine raised her head at the unaccustomed wavering sound.

"Ah, turn back, turn back!" she cried, answering a tone in the voice, not the words themselves. "It is not too late even yet. Listen to me," as he turned away, stretching out her hands imploringly. "You say yourself I have won a right to speak, then hear me. Ah, Ralph, for your own sake—for your child's—for

mine! Oh, if you have ever loved me, if you have any pity for all I have suffered, do not go to-day!"

Looking at his still, stern face, one would not think the passionate pleading had touched him; it was only when one saw the miserable expression in the half-averted eyes, and noted how the tightly clenched hand shook, that one could understand the control he was putting upon himself.

"These are our last few moments together," at length he said. "I may not see you for a long while, then——"

Her hands fell to her sides, and she made a few steps towards him; but though she said nothing more, there remained still on her white face the glow of passion that her words had called there, still in her raised eyes a shadow of pleading.

"I never look back," he said sternly, in answer to the mute question,—and the words seemed to recall to her memory the terrible fact that this was the moment of parting.

"O Ralph! Ralph!" she cried, throwing her arms about his neck, and kissing him again and again, "when you are away from me remember nothing about me, except the fact that I am your dear wife, Geraldine, as I remember always that you are all the world to me. Forget everything I have said excepting only these words, 'Come back to me.' Yes, everything," softly; "I can live through, so that you come back, and to me."

"Small fear of that," he said, kissing her fair head. "*If* I come back, it will be to you. Long ago I told you, did I not, sweet one, that all the love of my heart was yours? Well, now, I think I may add,

that having his love, you have got the best part of Ralph Calverley."

"I do not doubt that," she replied gently; "that is the wife's glad portion. Farewell. God guard you, dear husband, and bring you back to me."

He kissed her and went, but she remained long standing where he had left her.

How would he come back? To tell of success, which would surely be more terrible than death. "Oh no, no," throwing herself on her knees, "anything but that! Not death; for all that I have left me in this world is his life and his child!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

“TOO LATE! TOO LATE!”

“Not a sob, not a tear be spent,
For those who fell at his side,
But a moan, and a long lament,
For him—who might have died.”

THE voice of rumour, especially where its tale is of evil tidings, is always swift to make itself heard, even when there are no such things as telegraphs or railways to speed it on its way. So, long before any definite news reached Wilmington, Geraldine read the possible coming evil in the anxious looks and hasty words of those with whom she came in contact. Day by day the whispers grew louder, until it seemed from their very persistency that a shadow of truth must cling about them; and at length what was whispered in the ear seemed to be cried aloud in the market-place. The English arms had met with disaster, but where, when, or how, remained to be proved.

In all probability it was but a temporary reverse, these rebels were growing so skilled; and in the meantime there was nothing to be done but to wait and pray. And this was what was passing through Geraldine's mind as she sat in her room one wet gloomy evening in September, striving to sew, and keep her mind from wandering to all sorts of fateful possibilities.

How long would it be before anything was learned

for certain? And if these rumours proved true, how and when would her husband return? And if it were he himself to whom the reverse had come, how would he bear it? And how would the knowledge of it be received in high quarters?

"No;" and Geraldine's work fell unheeded, as a sharp pain went through her heart. "If it lies in his own hands, he will not survive defeat. Ah, God help me!" and she crossed into the next room to where the sleeping child lay, and kneeling beside the bed, buried her face in her hands. The very attitude was restful, and seemed to still the tumult at her heart.

After a long wakeful night, Geraldine fell towards dawn into a restless troubled sleep, out of which she was roused by the entrance of the landlady, scared and agitated.

"Mistress Calverley, if you are awake——"

"Yes," said Geraldine, starting up with a white, frightened face; "what is it? Not evil news?" with a cry of alarm.

"No, no; there is but little to tell," said the other, more soothingly; "only I fear, from what they say, there is worse to come."

"What have you heard?" asked Geraldine, steadying her trembling lips with difficulty; "tell me, I pray of you, at once." And then with sudden desperation, "Have you heard anything of—my husband?"

The other hesitated a moment, and then said abruptly, "I cannot tell you soft lies. They say it is he who has been defeated."

"But who do you mean by 'they'?" interrupted

Geraldine, pleadingly, laying a cold hand on the woman's arm; "and do they know anything, or is it only guess-work? Oh, for pity's sake, tell me!"

"Nothing is known yet, Mistress Calverley, but there are evil rumours everywhere, and it is as well to be prepared for the worst." Turning back as she neared the door, "There is no talk of anything but *defeat*," she said.

Then she went; but when Geraldine found herself alone, "Defeat," she repeated—"that means Death. For she knew that he stood where success alone could render life of value; and on a battle-field, with despair for an ally, death is not hard to find.

For hours of that day she waited—just waited—seated at the window, watching the falling rain and grey overcast sky, with hands folded patiently on her lap. And as she sat thus through those quiet morning hours, it seemed to her as if she were living over again her wedding-day. The same hush and stillness seemed to have settled down upon her. Her very thoughts were calm and peaceful, as she sat thus watching the pouring rain. All terror and anxiety, all fear seemed alike swept out of her life; nothing seemed left but a calm sense of waiting—she knew not what, but some surely coming evil.

"All my life seems to have been a preparation for it," she thought once, as remembrances of her childhood and girlhood swept across her. "I," smiling sadly to herself, "was always able to sit still. Pen used to envy me, when we were children. And mother—dear mother," clasping her hands,—“it used to

tease her that I was so quiet. Now it seems as if all my life I have been learning how to bear to-day!"

Suddenly up the quiet street came a sound that drowned the drip, drip of the rain on the window, the splash into the puddles below—the sound of a horse's hoofs. The swift paces paused under the window where Geraldine Calverley sat waiting,—the solitary rider, splashed and travel-stained, dismounted, and Geraldine knew that it had come. Whatever it was that she had been awaiting all those long hours—whatever evil she had been vaguely, unconsciously expecting, was close at hand now. The last moments of possible hope had been counted out, there was nothing now left but to face the dread certainty. Swiftly, scarcely knowing what she did, she rose to her feet, her hands pressed to her beating heart. A moment later, the figure of John Hammond, his uniform torn and stained, his boyish face careworn and unsmiling, stood in the doorway.

"What is it?" she cried, as he hesitated. "Tell me," hoarsely, "is he dead?"

"No; oh no."

"Oh, thank God!" she said softly, stooping to draw nearer the child, who, frightened by her mother's vehemence, had left her toys, and was clinging to her skirts.

"No, not that," he went on, unheeding her interruption, "but every other evil—defeat, disaster; there never was greater accumulation of woe!"

"What is it, Mr. Hammond," she said, steadying her thoughts with an effort,—“what is it you have to tell? Where are *they*?"

"They?" he repeated bitterly; "dead, wounded,

prisoners—how should I know? There are but few of us left.”

“And he?”

“He is a prisoner,” looking away as he spoke.

“A prisoner!” she repeated. Her arms fell to her sides, her eyes dilating with terror, as the full horror of his words came upon her. “Oh no, no, I cannot believe it. He would never—— Oh, Mr. Hammond, you cannot know what you are saying.”

“I wish to heaven there were any chance of my words proving untrue, but there is none. Others, when they find their way back here, if they ever do, will tell you the same tale. Do you think I would have left him if there had been a chance? But there was none; they were ten to one. Directly I saw him taken, I put spurs to my horse, and have ridden as fast as I could ride ever since to tell you. And now, perhaps, it was a cruel thing to have done!”

“Why?” she asked. “Ah,” moving nearer to him, “I thank you. Any knowledge is better than these hours of uncertainty I have borne this morning. Now there is hope, at least life,” she began wistfully, with eyes fixed on her companion’s face. But he avoided the appeal in them, and in reply to her words, gave an almost imperceptible shake of his head, walking past her as he did so to the window, where she had sat all the morning.

Something in his attitude, in his averted glance, seemed to chill her heart’s blood with a presentiment of a fateful possibility that she had overlooked, when she heard the words “he lives.” She paused a moment, her aching eyes fixed on the figure in the window, and then stole a few steps nearer to him.

"Mr. Hammond," she began, essaying to steady her voice. He gave a slight start when he heard her words, but he did not turn his head. "Mr. Hammond, what would be done to a man of my husband's rank—if he were made prisoner?"

The words seemed echoing through the room for untold ages in the drear silence that followed—a silence in which there was nothing to be heard but the drip of the rain, and the quick beating of her own heart. And in that silence Geraldine read her answer.

"O God help me!" then she cried; but though she covered her eyes with her hands, she did not shed a tear—such relief was not for such woe.

Young Hammond half turned when the despairing cry fell on his ear, and racked his brains to see if there were no word of comfort he could utter.

"It is different, I fear," he began.

"Different," she repeated. "Oh yes, there is no need to tell me; it is engraven on my heart now! Is there nothing to be done? Oh, Mr. Hammond," with sudden passion, her hand upon his wet coat-sleeve, "can I not see him? You must think for me—you *must* help me," with piteous entreaty. "You are kind and good, I know—then help me, help me!"

"Ah, Mistress Calverley, you must know how willingly I would do anything for you; but what is there I *can* do? It seems to me that there is nothing to be done."

"Nothing to be done?" she repeated; "you are talking at random, Mr. Hammond. Why, now is the time for everything to be done! Let me think. God

help me to think. What is needful? You can surely tell me that? Tell me what I need, to be permitted to see him?"

She was standing facing him now, her hands on the back of the chair, and by their strained hold he could see the efforts she was making to think and speak calmly.

"You would need a pass from the officer in command to get to him, I suppose," he replied.

A sudden flush of colour dyed her cheeks.

"Perhaps." She hesitated a second, and then with sudden impetuosity, "Ah, I have known so many of them! Would not one of their names help me now? Ah," clasping her hands, "help me! I would risk anything, try anything for the chance. You surely know what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand," he interrupted, almost roughly; "of course it might help you. You may know the man himself; his name is Honeywood—so I was told. He is commanding a detachment of General Greene's army."

Had he thought her white before, he wondered, as he watched the colour receding slowly from cheeks and lips, till it seemed to him it was a white lovely mask that was facing him, from which all life had fled. It was with an effort she recalled her straying senses, and strove to remember the pitiful eyes fixed upon her, but for a moment the room and the gaunt boyish figure seemed swaying before her eyes; then speaking quite coldly and steadily, all the passion and pain having alike died out of her voice: "Yes, I know him," she said; then still speaking in that unnaturally quiet voice, "I leave it to you to help me,

Mr. Hammond. I must go; my brain is dull and tired, so that I cannot think what is best to do. But you will think for me, won't you?" in an imploring tone, touching in such a proud, self-reliant woman. "Just put me in the right way to get to him, it is all I ask. *He*," with a slight quiver in her voice—"he will not fail me." John Hammond would have waited and attempted reasoning, but she impatiently bade him begone; "for you must find me a horse," she said, "and a guide."

"I will go myself," he said.

"You!" she cried, with a little shudder—"oh no, no;" and then low and penitently, "forgive me, I do not know what I am saying,—I am dazed with misery, I think. It shall be just as you think best. But think you, you would be doing right? And your life is not your own, to trifle with."

"You are right, perhaps," he said; "but all the same I will ride far enough with you, to put you on the right path: it is possible later you may succeed better alone. Under cover of the darkness I could go with you nearly all the way; 'tis but a matter of twenty miles straight riding from here to where they are encamped."

"Settle it as seems best to you, only I pray of you, do not delay; and above all, remember that I fear *nothing*, however many or great the dangers may be. Where are they?" she then asked.

"They have fallen back on their camp, but will doubtless now push on with all speed, either towards Charlestown, for it was thither our fugitives fled, or turn back in the direction of Yorktown."

"And did you really come all this way," Geraldine asked in a softer tone, "just to see me?"

"Yes," he assented; "but I almost regret it."

"No, no," she said, "you must never regret it. If you only knew how terrible this day has been, and how any relief after these hours of uncertainty is welcome, you would not repent. But I am idling time which might be more profitably spent, for there are no moments to be lost. Twenty miles is a long ride." And as Hammond shook his head doubtfully,—"You do not believe me capable of it," she cried; "that shows you do not know me. I was stunned at first, and unable to think; but now my mind is clearer, you will not find me troublesome. See, I am pleading with you, forgetting all the wide space between us, remembering only that you and my husband were"—a pause—"companions, and that you have often been kind to me. So listen to me now, for if you cannot, or will not help me, I shall be constrained to set forth alone, and maybe should waste time."

Then John Hammond said, "Trust in me, and be ready when it grows dark."

"Good-bye, sweetheart,—good-bye, my May-blossom. If I never return, Mr. Hammond, you will see she is taken care of, will you not? And if peace should ever come again, you will have her sent to the address you will find written on this packet,—it is that of friends who will be kind to her for her mother's sake. Now," rising up, white and still—"now I will forget everything past, think of nothing but the work I have to do;" and with a farewell kiss

to the little one, who slept on undisturbed, she turned away.

Outside, the rain was still falling heavily, and John Hammond's face showed white and anxious as he looked from her to the inclement sky overhead.

"Courage," she murmured, noting the look. "If it is for me you fear, take my hand if you doubt, and judge for yourself if it trembles."

Without a word he lifted her on to the saddle.

"I only doubt your strength," he said, "not your courage."

"You must measure my strength by my love," was her quiet answer, "if you would judge of what I am capable."

They started down the wet street, riding quietly till the town lay behind them, and then quickened their pace. No time was wasted in words. In silence they rode on under the inclement weather, the rain falling steadily down, till even through her thick cloak and riding-habit Geraldine could feel the damp stealing.

Her companion never spoke, except, on starting, to remark that speed was their best chance, seeing that the darkness might prevent discovery or pursuit, and also that to-morrow—— And there he hesitated.

"To-morrow, what?" questioned Geraldine, very low.

"It might be too late."

She shivered, but made no reply, only drew her cloak tighter about her. But though her lips were closed, her mind was active. Never, it seemed to her, had her way appeared so clear; through all the darkness around, a brightness seemed to gleam about her

own especial path. Doubts such as had often assailed her in other bygone difficulties, were all hushed to rest now, and she was most thankful for it; for often—so often in these late years, with all their trials and perplexities—there had been moments when the right had grown confused with the wrong, until it seemed difficult to set her foot down for fear of taking a false step. But now, ever since that first panic-stricken moment when the blow had fallen, and she had learned the terrible fate that had overtaken him she loved,—ever since that moment her mind had been perfectly clear. The Valley of Humiliation she had trod so long, claimed yet another few steps; and if by those few steps she could gain his life, what mattered her tired, aching feet? What mattered that her proud head must stoop lower even than it had ever yet done? What mattered anything, so that she gained that one good gift?

“And I must—I must! There must be no turning back now. If it is *his* indeed to give, he shall give it me!” Then with an effort she recalled her wandering thoughts. “I will not look on or think too much—it confuses me; and it is so needful I should keep my mind clear.”

After that, as she rode to the rhythm of the horses' feet, almost unconsciously she lived over and over again long-vanished scenes. She forgot the dripping rain and cold raw air, and was once again the girl sitting by her father's couch, listening to a string of verses, the while a horse's hoofs sounded, coming up the distant lane. “Patience! patience!” they seemed to say. Once again, a girl standing under the apple-trees, listening to the swift wooing of the hero

of all her young, happy dreams. Once again, a girl on her wedding-day—waiting, waiting the whole day through. "Patience! patience!" Once again, a mother, with tiny hands in hers, tiny head resting against her bosom. "Courage, courage!" now her heart-beats seemed to say. And after that? "Ah, waiting—always waiting," she thought, impatiently. And then of a sudden understood how the waiting had all been preparation—hard stern drill—and that to-night was the battle, to prove the stuff of which she was made. And here John Hammond's voice broke the stillness that had reigned so long between them.

"Mistress Calverley." She started. "We are drawing near to where it were best for us to part, if you hold indeed to your first idea that you would rather go on alone. Remember, you have but to say the word, and I go with you into the camp itself, into yonder general's presence."

"I believe you," she replied softly, "but I still think it is best I should go alone. I am a woman, and an American—why should they harm me?"

"You are the wife of Ralph Calverley."

"Have I forgotten it?" she cried. "Am I likely, in this bitter, bitter moment, to forget it? No; do not trouble for me. Ah, I see the lights," as a sudden bend in the road brought them in view. "Forget me from to-night," reining in her horse; "or if you ever recall this night, remember me only as a woman to whom once, in the direst straits to which, sure, ever a woman was brought, you were most true and kind."

She stretched out her hand, and he took it in silence. No words would come. It all seemed to

him so black and hopeless, that any hopeful words seemed naught but bitter mockery.

"If all goes well," she went on, a slight tremor in her voice, "you will know, though we may never meet again, that in the ranks of the enemy you have a friend who prays for you night and day,—one who prays that in the coming years you may learn, by the love of wife and child, to know all that you have done for me this day."

There were tears in John Hammond's eyes. "Farewell, Mistress Calverley. God keep you, and give you your heart's desire."

"Farewell," she repeated softly; and he fell back a pace or two, and she passed on to the goal, which was so terribly near at hand now.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROSEMARY—FOR REMEMBRANCE.

“Let not the land, once proud of him,
Insult him now;
Nor brand with deeper shame, his dim
Dishonoured brow.
Of all we loved and honoured, naught
Save power remains—
A fallen angel’s pride of thought
Still strong in chains.
All else is gone; from those great eyes
The soul has fled.
When faith is lost, when honour dies,
The man is dead.”

SHE rode dreamily on, quiet and unexcited: everything was so near, that it seemed to have cast a hush over her. But suddenly her mind was brought back to the present by the sound of a sentry’s challenge—

“Who goes there?”

“A friend, though I cannot give the password,” she replied, very quietly and distinctly. “I am a woman, a countrywoman, in great trouble and perplexity, and seeking your commander, General Honeywood.”

The man paused uncertainly.

“You cannot pass,” then, he said, “without the word; but if you care to wait, the sergeant will be round in a few minutes, and you can tell him your tale.”

“I will wait.”

Down poured the rain, steadily, steadily; but Geraldine was almost unaware of it. With all her strength was she listening for the sound of advancing feet; and at length they came, tramp, tramp, through the darkness. The sentry was relieved, and she heard him say something to the man in charge of the little band; then through the darkness a voice was brought to her ears—

“You—out yonder—what do you want?”

The rough Yankee voice was like music to her fainting heart.

“I wish to speak to General Honeywood. I am an American—a woman—and in sore trouble.”

A pause. A lantern was lifted, and she saw by its unsteady beams a circle of rough faces, and in front one who seemed to command—the one who spoke.

“What is your business? Can you not tell it to me? The General has retired. It is late hours for a woman to be abroad. Are you in truth an American?”

“You doubt me,” she said, slipping off her tired horse. “Ah, do not. I am a woman in great sorrow, and General Honeywood might help me. All I ask of you is to take me to him.”

She advanced a step nearer, as she spoke, and the light of the lantern was thrown upon her, disclosing for a moment her tired white face and soaked riding-cloak. Verily there did not seem much cause for alarm here.

The man in command drew nearer. “Come,” he said, “I will take you to the General’s quarters, and ask if he will see you.” Then to his men, “Fall in:

we will return to the fort. Jeff, slip your arm through yon horse's bridle."

With her habit over her arm, and her cloak drawn tightly about her, Geraldine's tired feet paced alongside of the marching soldiers, and at last, in utter silence, they paused before the narrow doorway of a low wooden house.

"Halt!" called the sergeant, and then turning to Mistress Calverley—"Wait here," he said; "I will go in, and ask if the General is willing to see you. But it is late. Still"—noting the piteous pleading in the eyes raised to his—"still, if the business is as important as you say, perhaps——" He turned away, whilst the men paused, in resting attitudes. In a second, however, he returned. "Who shall I say it is," he asked, "that desires to speak to the General?"

There was a moment's delay, and then in a clear low voice she answered, "Say that it is Mistress Geraldine Hawthorne who prays of him to see her."

"And a good sound American name too," the man said by whom she found herself standing, during the minutes that ensued. "Perhaps that hood hides a fair American face. Let us judge, Mistress."

A loud laugh received this witticism, and Geraldine shrank back, her cheeks flushing, into the doorway. But ere another playful speech had time to follow, the sergeant reappeared.

"Mistress Geraldine Hawthorne has the permission of General Honeywood to enter."

Coming so suddenly in from the outside darkness to the well-lighted room, it was some few seconds before Geraldine could see clearly its one occupant; and when he stood out distinctly from the surrounding

shadows, for a moment all memories of the past, all fears for the future, were alike swallowed up in the sudden thrill that the sight of the plain dark uniform sent to her heart.

And he? Many a bitter moment had Phil Honeywood known in his life, but perhaps none more bitter than when he lifted up his eyes and saw the woman in the doorway—saw the miserable eyes turned imploringly upon him,—saw them, and thought of the girl Geraldine Hawthorne.

“Mistress Calverley,” he said hoarsely, “you here!”

“Here?” she repeated, moving with swift, uneven steps to his side. “Where else should I be to-night?”

“There is nothing to be gained,” he said, raising his hand instinctively; but his face was averted as he spoke,—he could not meet those eyes.

“Oh, do not say so,” she interrupted. “Do not turn your head away. Look at me! Listen to me! And yet, heaven keep me, I have nothing to say!” wringing her hands together, “except—— Oh, General Honeywood, look at me, and see my misery for yourself! No,” as he made a step away from her, clasping his arm with despairing fervour, “you shall not go, unless you do wish indeed to drive me mad!”

He stood still then. “I am not going to leave you,” he spoke soothingly; “but you must not speak to me so, I cannot bear it,” throwing her hand off his arm; “I cannot listen to you—I *may* not.”

“Phil——” her voice had sunk almost to a whisper —“to me, you are not General Honeywood; it is no use bidding me remember it: to me you are just Phil Honeywood, the man whom I knew for many a year, —the man who was kind to me once when I was in

grievous straits,"—she paused, and drew a step nearer—"the man who was his friend."

"Hush!" he said imperiously, "I will not hear you."

"Oh, but you must hear me," she pleaded. "You would say, if you did not fear to hurt me, that it is all changed now,—that you are a great man, and that we," her voice trembled a little—"and that we are traitors——"

"Not you," he interrupted.

"You cannot separate us," she said; "our lot is one. If he lives, I live; if he dies, so do I."

He gave a little gesture of dissent.

"Do you think it is death I fear?" she cried with sudden passion; "then you have never realised what my life has been! Ah, Phil, Phil," once more laying her hand upon his coat-sleeve, "surely, even in this world, there is some compensation for the pain that I have suffered! Only his life," with a sharp, sudden cry. "Outlaw, disgrace, prison even, everything I can bear, only give me his life."

"I cannot—I cannot."

His hands were resting on the back of the chair from which he had risen, their swollen veins showing the constraint he was putting on himself.

"Is it decided?" she questioned. "No, it cannot be. Ah, do not say that it is too late for hope, or prayer."

"No," he said unsteadily; "but it will be to-night. And do not hope, I pray of you,—there is no hope."

"Phil," she cried, throwing herself down on the floor at his feet before he could prevent her,—“Phil, I cannot plead—you know I always had so few words;

but, Phil, my heart is breaking,—is broken, I think! —and all I can do is to pray of you, pray of you, if you have a human heart, as you had, I know, in days of old, to save him! You are strong and powerful, and he is weak and at your mercy, then be pitiful.”

“But I cannot. It is not in my power. Others——”

“Ah, but you,” she interrupted, “can influence them,—only that. Do *I* not know the influence?” but a sob, that seemed in truth to tell of a broken heart, cut her words in twain.

He raised her to her feet in silence, and paced the length of the room before he spoke. And then: “Ah, Mistress Geraldine,” he said, pausing by her side, where she stood following his every movement with wide-open, agonised eyes, “you do not need to be eloquent to me! Do you not know—— Ah, no,” breaking off impatiently, “you will never know——”

“But it is because I know, that I am here,—because I know that as you are strong you will be merciful,—or rather because I hope it.”

“Hope nothing,” he repeated, as he took another turn across the room; “my hands are tied; I can do nothing for you, except,” he hesitated,—“except, if you would like to see him?”

“Oh no, no, no,” shrinking away from him, “I could not, I could not! I am brave, but not brave enough for that. No. Other lips than mine must tell him that *his friend*,” with a defiant emphasis on the word, “will not stretch out a hand to save him.” And as General Honeywood essayed to interpose something,—“No,” with her hand on the lock, “no, I am going; do not try to stay me. Death could not long pass by such misery as mine is this night, and if not——”

"Stay!" he cried hoarsely, determinately, "you shall not go like this."

For a moment she hesitated in uncertainty, then with hasty steps stood once more by his side,—knelt down by him where he sat in the wooden chair, drawn up to the table, strewn with papers and maps.

"Phil," clasping her hand about his, "you are right,—I cannot go; not as long as these hands hold the gift of his life. See," pushing back his sleeve, and showing a great white scar across his wrist—"see, is it possible that this hand, that once gave him back to me, would now sign his death-warrant? Ah, Phil," all the passion dying out of her voice, and speaking low and painfully, "forget the gulf that divides us, and for the sake of that past, when you were companions and friends, show pity to us to-night."

Her hood had fallen back, displaying her disordered fair hair, with the many grey threads dulling its brightness; her grey eyes, passionate and pleading, were raised to his. He strove, though vainly, to draw his hands away from hers.

"I have not the power," he began, in unsteady tones.

"Phil," she interrupted—and for a moment a red painful streak dyed her cheeks, fading as rapidly as it came—"once, long ago, you made me a promise. It was long, long ago," her eyes wavering away from his,—“but surely a promise holds good for ever? You gave it when life was different from what it is now, but it is now I claim its fulfilment.” He made another effort to rise, but her clasp was so firm that he could not without force. “No,” her voice coming in painful gasps; “listen. I never thought I could have

fallen so low as to hold you to that promise; but oh, alas! alas! there is nothing,—no hope, however faint,—to which I would not cling to-night. Strive to forget the miserable anxious woman who pleads with you by her wifeness to-night, and only remember the girl, to whom you once promised that she had only to ask anything of you and it should be granted. Remember only the girl, Geraldine Hawthorne!”

“Ah, Geraldine!” he said, very low, “do you think that I need to remember that? Do you not know,—but ah, no,” breaking off suddenly, “you know nothing—care for nothing but him!”

“Nothing!” she echoed, her voice dying away into a sort of sob.

There was a full minute’s silence after that single word, which had indeed the ring about it of a broken heart. Then: “I will do what I can,” the man said, in slow, unwilling tones, rising to his feet and glancing at the clock as he spoke. “Not,” gently unclasping her hands, which still clung to where the scar showed upon his wrist—“not because I, General Honeywood, esteem it to be my duty, but because you, Geraldine Hawthorne, have prayed it of me.”

Dazed and bewildered, Geraldine rose, but having done so, staggered, and would have fallen, if General Honeywood had not prevented her.

“I do not thank you,” raising her haggard eyes to his. “God will reward you, and my prayers will follow you.”

“I can promise nothing,” he interrupted her sternly, lifting his cloak from where it lay on the chair, and wrapping it about him.

"You have promised everything," she said softly, "so it seems to me, and in that promise I am living."

No other word passed between them. In silence, without a farewell of any kind, General Honeywood prepared to quit her; but of a sudden Geraldine seemed to awaken to the life about her, and crossed, though with unsteady feet, to the door, and there stood facing him, her back against it.

"Before you go," she said, in quick, uneven tones, "you must tell me something. Is it to decide his future you are going now?"

"Yes."

"And whilst you are absent,—ah," stretching out her hands imploringly, her voice falling, "let me see him."

He made no reply in words, but he took her hand in his, and opening the door, led her down a dark, narrow passage, and after a few steps paused. "I will leave you with him till I return," he said.

With her hand on the lock of the door he had opened, Geraldine paused. "Are you not coming in?" she asked, as he turned away.

"No," he said roughly; and then more gently, "it hurts me to see him." But whilst she yet hesitated on the threshold, he strode back to her side. "Ah, Geraldine!" he cried passionately, "you are going to see him, and your eyes are brighter already at the mere thought! Do you think, I wonder, what it is for me to suffer, as *I* suffer this night?" And before she could speak, catching her hands roughly in his: "Do you understand, that it is only because I have not the courage to look in your eyes, and tell it to *you*, that I am about to essay to stretch out my hand to save him?"

If his words touched or affected her in any way, a moment later they were forgotten,—a moment later, when the door, having closed behind her, she stood in the presence of her husband. It was a small room in which she found herself—a small room, dimly lighted by one candle, flaming on a table, which showed the outlines of a man's figure seated upright and motionless on a chair, which, with a small couch, seemed to be the only piece of furniture in the room.

Well could Geraldine's heart echo General Honeywood's words, as she stood there gazing at the still figure, the dark hair pushed back from his brow, the uniform torn and stained with blood in many places; one sleeve had been roughly cut open, to admit of the arm being bound up, and it was this that first caught Geraldine's eyes, or at least it was this that first gave her back her voice.

"Oh, Ralph," she cried, hastening to his side, "you are wounded!"

"Who is it?" he asked unsteadily, turning at the sound of her voice; and then, with something approaching horror in his tones—"not Geraldine?"

"Your *wife*, Ralph," she said softly, in her sweet, tired voice, but there was a shadow of reproach echoing through it. "Did you not think I would come, Ralph? Did you not hope it?"

"No."

She stood still as the word answered her, the eager shadow of hopefulness which had enveloped her forsaking her, and folded her hands tightly together as if in sudden pain.

For a few seconds he paused after saying that word, then slowly lifted his eyes to hers—noted the

passionate, pleading pain in those above him, noted the dark circles about them, the thin white cheeks, the despairing droop of the whole figure,—and turned away his head with a groan that seemed wrung from his very heart. At the despairing sound, Geraldine flung herself on the ground at his feet; never before had she seen her husband on the common level of mankind, to which the necessity of pity reduces each one alike, and it was like seeing a strong man die. All the terrible past, all the fears of present and future, were alike forgotten in the knowledge that he was suffering—suffering in body and mind.

“Ralph,” steadying her voice, and speaking low and tenderly, “is your arm very painful? Is it badly hurt?” And as he did not immediately reply, “Is that your only wound?” she asked tremulously.

“Yes,” in tones distinct, yet low, “and my only regret is that the ball did not pierce my heart in lieu of my arm.”

She shuddered. “Had you no thought for me, then?” And as he made no reply,—“Oh, Ralph,” she cried, striving with loving persistency to draw down the left hand that hid his eyes, “do you indeed speak truth when you say you do not desire to see me? Does it indeed grieve you that I should be here? Why, where else could I be this night, when the whole world is nought to me without you?”

“You have the child,” he said sullenly.

“The child!” she repeated in passionate tones. “The child that is the link between our hearts. Did you indeed believe that she could usurp your place? Oh, Ralph,” her voice sinking into a sob, “have I indeed merited that you should say that?”

"No, you have not. But you have shaken me, coming in this fashion. I," his voice sinking, "was prepared for anything. They might shoot me, hang me, anything that seemed good to them,—but you here, it is different."

"How different?" essaying to speak quietly.

"You shake my courage," he replied. "I thought, I hoped you might never know; but as it is——" breaking off suddenly.

"But as it is," she continued softly, "whatever they may do,—and I pray—ah! under every word I say, every thought of my heart is a prayer for mercy,—as it is, we are together; surely, even you, Ralph, must find some comfort in that?"

The tears were falling fast now, but she did not pause to brush them away, only crept closer, closer to him; and as she did so, of a sudden he stretched out his arm and drew her close to his breast. She clasped her arms about his neck then, kissing his worn cheeks and dark grizzled hair.

Perhaps those tears were as much for the wreck and ruin he had made of his life, as for anything else. But despite her pity and her sorrow—despite the soft caressing hands that smoothed back the dark curls from his forehead, her tongue was tied. Words would not come. And words, so she feared, might so easily be construed into reproaches or pity, and if she could spare him nothing else of the shame and grief he must feel that night, he should, at least, be spared so much.

But as he felt her tender kisses, of a sudden he lifted his haggard eyes, which had hitherto avoided hers, and "Why do you not reproach me?" he asked.

"I do not wish you to spare me. Say what you will, do what you will, you cannot make me suffer more than I have suffered this day. All I can tell you is, that had it not been for my broken wrist, I should not have been alive to tell you this to-night."

"Oh, Ralph," all her fortitude once more breaking down at his words, and her tears falling fast and thick, "you cannot be serious—cannot comprehend the cruelty of what you are saying, or—oh, remember if *you* have suffered, I have surely suffered too!"

"I remember it," in a cold, quiet voice, but he permitted her to pass her arms about his bowed neck—did not prevent her even laying her soft cheek against his; "and it is because of that memory that I would fain have spared you to-night."

"And did it truly seem to you," speaking low and painfully—— "No, no!" passionately interrupting herself; "any life I could bear, have borne, but not death," clinging more tightly to him yet as she spoke.

For a moment there was silence, dead silence, in which Geraldine heard nothing but the quick beats of the heart against which she leant; then with a little cry, as of fear, she drew back and raised her hand to his eyes: "Lift your head, Ralph," she said unsteadily; and as he did not obey—"What is it?" she questioned. "Are these tears? Oh, Ralph, you frighten me. What is it?"

Another moment's silence, and then, "I think it is shame," he answered slowly.

Her own sobs came fast at his words, but she did not answer them. What answer could she make?—Only gently, tenderly, she kissed the scorching drops away, and then sank down on the floor by his side,

her head resting against his knee, and with eyes staring forlornly at the flaring candle, waited.

The slow hours passed, and still she did not move, as in the dread silence she battled with despair. She was tired, worn out in body and mind, but she could scarcely realise it—could scarcely feel, either, the chill that was making itself felt through her rain-soaked habit. Once, as she drew his hand down and laid her cheek against it, he said, "Your dress is wet, Geraldine."

"Yes," she replied softly, "it was raining hard."

Though she said nothing further, a minute afterwards he felt her shiver. He took his arm away then, and gathering up his own riding-cloak, which had been flung across the couch, at the cost of some little difficulty, with his one available arm wrapped it about her. "You are chilled," he said; "it grows cold and late."

She did not thank him in words, only drew his hand back to its resting-place against her cheek, with a little caressing gesture.

At last, and though the time had seemed long, yet now the break in it, which foretold certainty, seemed to have come all too soon. At last there were steps down the narrow passage, a touch on the lock.

A kiss on the hand she held, told Colonel Calverley she was not asleep, as he had half grown to fancy, but awake and listening; then the door opened, and General Honeywood stood in the entrance. For an instant he paused, passing his hand across his eyes,—the sight of the figure in the habit kneeling at the man's feet, recalled so vividly another such scene

in bygone days; then, as she turned, and he saw the wan face with burning eyes fixed in such terror, such agony on his, he read the sad, sad difference that lay between that day and this.

At the opening of the door Ralph Calverley rose to his feet, and Geraldine did the same, but she still held his hand tightly clasped in hers, and so holding it, turned to face the new-comer. All weariness and cold alike forgotten, as she raised those passionate grey eyes to his; but despite the pitiful appeal in them, her attitude was bold and dauntless. There was something in the way she stood by the worn, wounded man, with her hand on his, as if she defied his captor to separate them.

"Ralph Calverley," he said, "it has been permitted me to acquaint you to-night with the decision at which my colleagues have arrived respecting you." He paused. He noted even in that moment how Geraldine's clasp tightened on the hand she held, how her lips grew whiter. "It has been decided," he went on, "that your life shall be spared on condition——"

But he got no further: a sharp cry cut his sentence in twain.

"Oh, Phil," moving to his side and laying her trembling hands on his, "I *cannot* thank you. My heart, my very voice is so dead, that I can think of nothing to say." He would have checked her, but she went on unheeding. "No; it is to you I owe it, to you alone, I know. My hope and trust are well rewarded."

"As you will," he said curtly, not answering her, however, or looking at her. "His life was granted to

me, to *my* request; and even Phil Honeywood had a hard fight to gain it!"

"And for having gained it, for having dared to be merciful—— Oh, Phil," her voice breaking down, "if all the gratitude of which a heart is capable is any reward——"

"It is," he said, briefly; "your eyes are more eloquent than any words." He was turning away without anything further, when he paused. "I was forgetting, you must be cold and wearied, Mistress Calverley; there is a small room next to this, where there is at least a comfortable couch; it would be as well for you to take a few hours' sleep."

"No, no; I pray you let me remain here."

"It would be wiser not. Colonel ——, your husband"—with an effort—"will tell you it is wiser."

"Go, Geraldine." Ralph said nothing more, but Geraldine made as if to obey him. "Take my cloak," he added; "it is dry, at the least."

Mechanically she obeyed him, and General Honeywood opening the door, they stood once more in the dim passage, with the soldier on guard outside the room they had quitted. Three or four more steps brought them to another door, which General Honeywood opened.

"Strive to sleep," he said. "All your courage and strength will yet be needed; that will help you."

The light dazzled her eyes, and she put up her left hand as if to shade them.

"I am dazed," she said with a sob, "and so tired and miserable, but even though I say nothing, can scarce even think,—yet, oh, Phil, I *feel*, I *feel*! Knowing what it must have cost you, I feel how nobly you

have kept a promise, made long years ago, to a girl!"

"God knows how willingly I would have bought, at any cost, that no necessity to keep my promise had ever arisen! When I said, 'Cry to me if ever you are in trouble, and if it lies within my power, you may count upon my help,'—I thought then you were gaining everything that could make life worth having——"

"And I have had much," she interposed. "His love has always been mine."

He turned away impatiently. "Always him," he muttered. "Have you no thought for any one else—no memory for any other life beyond this one?"

"What would it avail?" she said, sadly. "The gulf between me and my past life is too wide—too deep for anything to bridge across it. Do not mistake me," as he would have spoken. "Do I not know all that you have done for us this night? But such gulfs *cannot* be bridged across,—only a strong hand can be stretched downwards to save when one is drowning, and that is what you have done. For the sake of the past——"

"Yes," he muttered; "because when I was certain death could only reach him through your heart, my courage failed me. Good night."

"Good night," she repeated, faintly. Then of a sudden the faintest shadow of a blush on her cheeks, "General Honeywood——"

"Say 'Phil.'"

"Phil," softly. "He would not let me stay. He is ill—he—— Ah, Phil, do not let him suffer more than is needful."

"Rest contented," he replied, "and fear for nought.

I will give orders that he is attended to." And without another word they separated.

A dim sense of comparative peace stole over Geraldine as she stood inside the room,—a dim consciousness of how weary, and cold, and wet she was.

The room was small and scantily furnished, but there was a low camp-bed in one corner, and a few logs were burning in the fireplace, and the outward sense of comfort threw its shadow of peace over her aching heart. Something seemed to tell her, as she stole nearer to the welcome flame, that it was his own room Philip Honeywood had given up to her, and in her loneliness and misery there was comfort in the knowledge of his protecting friendliness,—a friendliness that had lasted so many years, outlived so much of sin and sorrow, and had dared to be strong in behalf of one who had thrown aside the claims of family, friendship, country—everything a man should hold most dear,—and burning tears rose to her tired eyes. But strive as she might to look away and forget it, clear and straight before her showed that night, in distinct lines, the two lives reunited thus for the first time since, strong and hopeful, they had stood side by side fighting for their country.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HE WAS MY FRIEND.

“Yet, alas! to be as we have been,
And to be as we are to-day!”

MEANWHILE General Honeywood, with a shade of doubt on his face, paced once or twice up and down the narrow passage, and at length, pausing as if he had come to a decision, signed to the sentry to step aside, and once more entered the room occupied by Ralph Calverley.

He was seated exactly where he had been all that long night, where Geraldine had found him—no alteration in his attitude, except that his face was hidden on the arm thrown across the table.

He moved slightly at the opening of the door, and General Honeywood said, half questioningly, “You are not asleep?”

“Asleep!” echoed the other. “Is it likely?”

“Are you suffering? I promised your wife”—a little stiffly—“I would see if aught could be done for you.”

“Nothing”—making an effort to move as he spoke.

“Do not try to rise,” Philip remonstrated. “Though you will not allow it, you are dizzy, I can see, with pain and loss of blood. Are you sure”—hesitatingly—“that you would not wish your wife to remain with you, or the doctor?”

“No, no; you mean well, I believe, but——”

"You must rest," General Honeywood urged, a few minutes later, "for you will need all your strength. I could only buy your life on one condition—namely, that you give your parole not to move out of Endicot till the war is over. Captain Sumner will take you and your wife thither, with an escort, to-morrow."

"It is too much," cried Ralph fiercely, realising the meaning of these words, and for the first time roused out of the kind of stupor in which he had remained all along,—“it is buying life far too dearly. I refuse the terms.”

"And your wife?"

But heedless of the interruption,—“Do you think I fear death, that you dream I would pay such a price for life? If it had not been for this,” with a significant gesture towards his broken right arm, “do you think I would have left it in other hands to decide my fate for me? No; once for all, I refuse.”

General Honeywood was standing by the little window, his back turned to the room and its occupant; it hurt him, as it used to hurt Geraldine, to see that scarlet coat, its gay trappings all soiled and torn.

"And do *you* think," he said slowly, "that I would not have made the terms as easy as possible? Have you, in truth," his voice taking a bitter ring, "so completely forgotten the past, that you cannot understand that it must, in some fashion, influence the present?"

"You have done what you could, I do not doubt it." All the passion had gone out of Ralph Calverley's voice—it was cold and stern as ever; "but it now rests with me to decide if I can accept your offer. I have decided. I cannot accept it."

"But you must." General Honeywood spoke quickly

and decidedly, turning round as he spoke. "You must put self out of the question. What matters it what *you* feel? Do you think that I imagine you fear death? Do you think," his voice sinking a little, "that I knew you all those years without discovering that you were not a coward? Why, the only courage left for you is to live!"

But Colonel Calverley shook his head.

"You are mistaken: the best thing I can do is to die. So take my answer back to your colleagues, and tell them to shoot me, hang me, do with me what they will,—Ralph Calverley asks for no mercy."

"And Geraldine Calverley? Do you think she merits no better fate than to be branded for life as the widow of a man who was shot for treason?"

"She has lived as his wife."

The answer was low, but his listener caught it.

"And you think," he said scornfully, "because she has borne the one fate that it will be easy for her to bear the other! No," breaking off impatiently, "that is not what I would say. I do not wish to hurt you with words—that will do no good to either of us. But all the same you must hear me; you owe so much to my past—and to hers. Ah, I cannot argue it quietly. I am an impulsive man, not cold and quiet like you, or rather," pacing up and down the narrow room, "perhaps I should say I *was* an impulsive man, before life had set its mark upon me. I cannot speak quietly even now, when I see you hesitating thus, knowing all the while that it rests with you to give her the poor amends for happiness, which is all she can hope for now. No," as Colonel Calverley would have interrupted, standing still with folded arms,—

"no, you are at my mercy now, and you *shall* hear me. You have spoken,—have bid me refuse the terms offered you: well, my answer is, that I refuse to do your bidding! I wonder sometimes," as the man before him did not speak, did not even look up, "if you comprehend the worth of the love that has braved all she has braved for your sake? Or perhaps," bitterly, "you comprehend, but do not care. Do you think you owe her nothing for all that she has suffered? And if she claims your life as the purchase-money, can you refuse it to her?"

"I cannot refuse to listen to you," Colonel Calverley said slowly, but he had risen now, though he staggered a little as he did so, and even had to steady himself by resting his hand on the table. "I am powerless, and, as you say, at your mercy."

"Yes, and you shall listen to me," went on the other vehemently. "When I think of all she has done for you—when I know, as I do know full well, all that your death would mean to her, I cannot remember anything but that it is your life for which she prays, your life, all that she asks from your hands. With her voice still ringing in my ears, I cannot comprehend you,—that you should be harder than I—you, her husband!"

"You mean well," slowly, and a trifle unsteadily. "You are mistaken if you think I do not care, or that I hesitate. It is because I *do* care,"—there was a momentary spasm across the still haggard face—"because I *do* care, that I have *never* hesitated. Death is her only chance of freedom, and"—a dark flush for a moment dyeing his cheeks—"my only hope."

"Yes, your only hope, perhaps. I do not deny

that; but do you think that it is such freedom she desires? You know it is not. No!" he cried vehemently, "cold and hard as you may strive to appear, once I knew you too well to dream that you have no feeling. So, forget that it is General Honeywood who speaks to you,"—moving a step nearer,—“and only remember—Phil, who was your friend—Geraldine, who is your wife,—and for the sake of that past, which I,”—his voice shaking,—“cannot forget, accept the chance of rescue offered, however bitter it may be. Ralph,” passionately, “you do not—cannot refuse!”

It was the first time the name that had once been oftenest on his lips had escaped him, and Ralph Calverley noted it, and winced at the once familiar sound.

There was silence, deep and unbroken. Then the dark eyes were lifted, and “What is it that is asked of me?” he questioned.

And Philip knew he had conquered.

“Captain Sumner will start with you and your wife for Endicot to-morrow,” he replied; “and you will remain there at Judge Sweetapple’s house on parole, till the war is over. You will be told this officially in the morning. In the meantime try to rest. It will be a wearisome day, and you are not as strong as you strive to pretend.”

He turned away, but ere reaching the door paused and looked back. “You shall see *her* in the morning,” he said. Then once more made as if to leave, but as he did so, there reached his ears a sudden hoarse cry which arrested his steps.

“Phil! Phil!” He hastened back as the sound

reached his ears, but then paused irresolutely; for Ralph Calverley had flung himself down on the chair from which he had risen, and had hidden his face once more on the arm that rested on the table. General Honeywood stood thus a moment in doubt: to see the downfall of this man, who had been his youth's friend and hero, was terrible to him beyond all powers of expression. The sight of the dark hair that had grown so grey, the bowed head, and, above all, that cry which still echoed in his ears, hurt him as nothing else could have done.

As he stood thus, his face softening under the influence of the memories that were affecting him, it almost seemed as if the kindly *insouciant* face of the old Philip Honeywood showed as if from behind a mask—the Phil Honeywood who had come down so long ago to Endicot, and had there met his fate in the grey eyes of Geraldine Hawthorne.

"I can do nothing for you," then he said, but his voice was low and full of pain. "I can say nothing,—but,"—he hesitated a second—then the slighter fingers for a moment closed over the powerful hand that rested on the table. For the first time Ralph Calverley felt their clasp, since that wet stormy night when he had chosen the future, to reach which the past had had to be obliterated.

It was yet early in the morning, when Geraldine was aroused out of a troubled sleep by a voice calling to her that she was needed. When, a few minutes later, she opened the door, it was to find herself in the presence of General Honeywood.

"I am grieved to disturb you so soon," he said,

"but I was certain you would prefer to see me to any one else; and I have to go out shortly." The grey eyes turned gratefully upon him, showed she appreciated his thoughtfulness. "Besides which," he continued, "I wish to say a few words to you. But I will not say them here," with a glance at the soldier, who stood a few paces off. "Come," and he led the way into the room in which she had seen him the previous evening, and having entered it, closed the door behind them. "I have made you a cup of coffee," he said, drawing a stiff high-backed chair up to the fire as he spoke. "Sit down, I pray of you."

She seated herself as he told her, but did not speak. The flush of excitement and terror that had stimulated her to do and dare anything the previous evening had faded now, leaving her wearied and worn out in body and mind.

For some minutes he said nothing further—only prepared the coffee and gave it to her; and, despite everything, there was a likeness to the Phil Honeywood of old,—the Philip Honeywood who had helped at the sewing-party, and had been the beloved of Cousin Miriam's heart, that tended to set Geraldine more at her ease.

"Now you are looking better," he said kindly. "There is a shade more colour in those white lips."

"How good you are!" she exclaimed; but he saw her lips tremble, and her eyes fill with tears at his words. "But I am a coward this morning,—not nearly so courageous as I was last night," lifting her white face to his. "Then I could have braved anything, but this morning——"

"This morning you are wearied and feeling the

ill effects of last night's cold ride; but you will be better presently," turning his eyes away from the tears that glittered on her lashes, and busying himself with pen and ink at the table.

She finished her coffee in silence, and for a few minutes sat crouching over the fire, and stretching out her cold hands to the welcome blaze. Then she crossed to General Honeywood's side. Standing a little behind him, so that she could not see his face—

"Phil," she said gently, "you are not deceiving me, are you? It——" a pause, "it is all right?"

He stopped writing, but he did not look up.

"Yes"—his voice was low, so low that she only caught the last words—"I believe so."

"Only believe," she repeated tremulously, clasping the back of the chair against which she stood. "You said——"

"Yes," he interrupted, "it is all right in so far as I am concerned, or, as I should say, *we* are concerned. But——"

"But what?"

"It is as well to tell you, though I honestly think there is no danger now. I believe he has thought better of it since; but at first he refused the terms."

"Refused the terms!" she echoed incredulously.

"He will have to hear them officially, and give his answer in an hour," half turning round, but not looking up into the face above him, "and I tell you I honestly believe you need fear nothing. I believe he will agree to what is offered him *now*."

"He must. Oh, you must not listen to him! He is ill. Oh, help me!"

He laid his hands over the trembling fingers that rested on his chair.

"Do not fear," he said soothingly. "You believe me, do you not, when I tell you I am certain there is nothing to fear? Still, I thought you had better learn, before you saw him, that there had been such a doubt in his mind."

"Thank you," brokenly; and then pleadingly, "May I——"

Phil sighed as he rose to his feet, but he still kept her hand in his.

"Yes, you shall go to him," he said. "He loves you; you have influence, therefore. So that if *I* failed——"

"It was you, then," she said, pausing—"you who strove to make him have mercy on me, if he would not on himself?"

"Yes, it was I," he answered, in half-ashamed tones.

She did not answer, but stooped her head, and kissed the hand that still held hers.

"There is nothing," he said very low, "I believe, that Geraldine Hawthorne could ask of Phil Honeywood, and which lay in his power to give her, that she could ask in vain."

"But I am Geraldine Calverley," she replied softly, though with a gentle stress upon the word.

"I remember the Geraldine," he said, "and I forget, for her sake, the gulf that lies between General Honeywood and Ralph Calverley."

A few moments, and she was once more by her husband's side.

He had looked worn and suffering the previous night; now, in the chill of the morning light, it sent

a pang to Geraldine's heart to observe how ill he appeared. But he held out his hand in welcome when he saw who it was, and as she came nearer, drew her close to his heart with passionate tenderness, kissing the fair hair as he held her there.

For a moment she remained passive, and then raised her eyes, and in their anxious, questioning expression, he seemed to guess what lay there concealed.

"Do not fear, Geraldine," answering the unspoken question. "However hard and bitter the terms may be, I shall accept them; but fate has well avenged you to-day!"

"Ah, Ralph, it is not vengeance I want! Why," with sudden passionate vehemence, "any vengeance, as you call it, would have, of necessity, to pierce *my* heart first!"

"Geraldine,"—Colonel Calverley spoke a little unevenly,—“if you thought last night, or think this morning, from my words, that I do not love you as you merit, you are mistaken. Phil—— I was told that I am unworthy of such love as you have given me.”

"Oh, hush, Ralph, hush," she interrupted softly; "I have never doubted your love. And if I had doubted, knowing you as well as I do, I can judge the worth of it by the proof to which it is put to-day. "But, Ralph,"—clasping her soft arms about his neck, and speaking almost in a whisper,—“long ago you told me that there is nothing to be said—there is nothing *can* be said—between us; only, remember always, I pray of you, that day and night I have thanked heaven all these years, that whatever else I had lost, I had still your love—and your life. You will never forget that, will you? It is,” with un-

conscious pitifulness, "nearly everything I have left." She felt him wince away from her. "Did I hurt your arm?" she asked quickly, compassionately.

"No; it was my heart, I think, you hurt. I am weaker than I thought," he said after a moment, sitting down again and passing his hand wearily across his brow. "It has been a long dreary night."

"I wish you had let me stay," she said, pain in her voice; "but I fancied," a little doubtfully, "that you did not need me."

"No; but now I do," taking her hand in his, and drawing her down till she was kneeling by his side, her eyes hidden against his knee. "Ah, I fear, child, I could not have thought so calmly if you had been here. Now, I do not frighten you, do I, as I did last night? Now I am even prepared in some measure for what I have to go through to-day. And surely," drawing his hand suddenly away, "there is no one who comprehends what it is to me! Oh," with sudden vehemence, "I cannot, I cannot!"

"Yes, Ralph," rising and standing by his side, her hand on his shoulder; "yes, Ralph, but for the baby's sake, and for mine."

He did not answer.

The slow minutes dragged by till Geraldine felt that the allotted hour must be nearly over.

Presently he rose and walked as far as the door and back again, quietly and steadily, but as if in a dream. "Geraldine," then he said,—and she, dazed and miserable, hastened to his side, and raised her white face, which strove to be calm, to his—"Geraldine," stooping his tall figure and whispering low in her ear, "kiss me," flushing uneasily as he spoke.

She flung her arms about his neck, and kissed him again and again with a passionate tenderness born of her aching pitiful heart, and then the summons came; and without a word—in silence—calmly and steadily, Ralph Calverley answered it.

“Courage,” she murmured, following him to the doorway. “Oh, Ralph,” with sudden significance, “keep your word to me, whatever it may cost you! Remember all I have left is in *your* hands now.”

Another moment and he was gone, and Geraldine was left alone to wait the issue of the trial.

At first, after she was left alone, her thoughts came so fast and thick that they seemed to have passed beyond her control. But after a while, when she recognised that she was growing faint and dizzy—for she was still standing where she had stood to whisper “courage”—she staggered to the chair in which he had kept his vigil through the long night, and sat down in it with folded hands and closed eyes. Then there came over her a sort of blank, which was yet not unconsciousness, though it seemed to sweep out the harsh lines of present and future, and weave sweet fancies about the far-off past. The echoing hoofs which had sounded in her ears the previous evening, were to be heard again. “Patience, patience!” and then “Courage, courage!” but growing fainter and fainter, like sounds listened to in a dream; or was it merely her own quick heart-beats that she heard? She moved a little, and clasped her hands above her heart to feel its loud pulsations, then closed her tired eyes again. But she could not rest; her brain, physically weary as she was, was too active to admit of that. And in proof that she was not asleep, she

recognised the first sound of voices—the first tramp of footsteps—though the very sounds seemed to deepen the spell in which she rested, as incapable of action as of consecutive thought.

How long after that was it that the door opened, and the room seemed full of faces? All strange faces, so it seemed to her. Instinctively she rose to her feet, looking piteously around for some one she knew; but all she could see were those plain dark uniforms that once she had known so well, and amongst them a scarlet glitter which, for some reason—what is it, she wondered?—hurt her eyes. With a swift movement she stretched out her hand as if to place a shield, a dividing line, between the two colours; then of a sudden slipped, slipped—seemed falling for ever and ever, and saw nothing more.

When she came back to consciousness, she was lying on the little couch in the corner of the room, a strange man leaning over her with a shadow of anxiety in his quick, shrewd eyes.

“That’s right,” with a sigh of relief. “Why, I began to fear we had let you starve to death under our hospitable roof! You don’t know me? Well, I’m the doctor, Dr. Peters, and tremendously glad I am to see you open your eyes! I am not much accustomed to doctoring women, but I guess you’re all right now, or will be, when you have had something to eat.”

“Tell me,” said Geraldine faintly, half raising herself—“you must know. Is he——”

“Oh, he’s all right,” said the doctor quickly, turning away to drop something into a glass. “Yes, I know what you mean, of course. They’ve given him

his life, and I consider it is about as much as he deserves." This was added as an aside, but there was a pained look in the girl's eyes that showed she had heard. "Don't mind me," he added somewhat roughly, though there was a kinder look than the words warranted, in his shrewd eyes. "Here, drink this; it will do you good."

She took the glass and swallowed its contents obediently, and a slight tinge of colour, stole back to her white lips.

"A good servant, brandy, if a bad master," he said, noting the improvement in looks. "Now you're better, aren't you?"

"Yes, thank you, much better; but tell me——"

"No, I cannot tell you anything, or rather will not, because you had much better rest a bit; besides, we have to be off shortly. But don't you worry," noticing the feverish colour rise to her cheeks; "they will leave you here some hours before you need start, only General Honeywood——"

"General Honeywood," she repeated. "Oh, Dr. Peters, I must speak to him, if only for a minute. See, I am quite strong now," rising as she spoke. "Take me to him."

"No, no; he will doubtless come to you. I will tell him you wish to see him."

"Ah, pray do."

"Yes," said the doctor, pausing again, "I will do your bidding, if you will do mine. Remember, a good breakfast is what I order."

She nodded impatiently, and he departed, and very shortly afterwards General Honeywood entered the room.

He was equipped for riding, and for a moment Geraldine's heart gave a great bound out of the depths of her present misery to the memories he, in such guise, called up.

"Is it really all those years since I have seen it?" she said in a dreamy tone, touching the coat gently, as he stood beside her.

He understood the words and the little gesture, but there was nothing he could say on such a subject. "Are you better now?" he asked. "Peters says we have starved you; but you will be taken good care of by Captain Sumner, Pen's husband, you know. He is to remain behind and go with you."

"And *him*?" lifting quick, anxious eyes to his.

"Yes," gravely, "you will be together."

She clasped her hands in mute thankfulness, and then rising and laying her hand on his arm, "I have never heard of any one regretting an act of mercy in after-life,—I do not think it is possible,—but I *know* you never will. I think, Phil, by-and-by, in another world, you will find that this night's work has turned one of the keys that lead into heaven." Her low voice shook a little, but her grey eyes were lifted steadily to his. "Dear Phil," her clasp tightening on his coat-sleeve, "you are expecting more fighting, I hear. Whatever may have been——" And then pausing and altering her sentence—"You know, Phil, how near to my heart the success of your arms is to me; now, *to-day*, there is no reason why I should not, with undivided allegiance, pray for you and yours. Good-bye, and God bless you."

"Good-bye," he answered, and there hesitated. There was something in his throat that made words

difficult. He stretched out his hand to the glass of water on the table, and drank a little. "I cannot bear to say farewell"—he paused, and added hastily—"like this; but for whatever I have done I am rewarded, well rewarded. It is not so many women one meets who are worthy of all that can be done for them. But for *you*,—ah, Mistress Geraldine! though you are as far above and beyond me as the stars of heaven, yet your image is for ever engraved on my heart—by love and courage—the ideal wife. No other image will ever efface it," his voice sinking. "Geraldine, never forget to think of me—that is the reward I claim—as your friend."

"Never, Phil, never," taking his hand in hers. "If it is indeed possible that one touch of the past could sweeten the bitter present, it would be the knowledge that my friendship was still of value to you."

"I have not so much else, have I?" speaking quickly and undecidedly, holding her hand in his the while. "If life has robbed you of much, surely I have had losses too! Friendship, love, everything has failed me, all that most men possess,—there is nothing left for me but my career, and the place in your heart you have promised me." He felt the hand he held tighten its hold. Then, "Farewell!" he said huskily, and for a moment the tall straight figure, with its crown of golden hair, the thin white cheeks and serious grey eyes, showed indistinctly through a mist of tears,—then without a word he turned away, that silent hand-clasp his last farewell.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAD MEMORY.

“Defeat meant something more than death.”

AND so it came to pass, by the irony of fate, and the chances or mischances of war, that the inhabitants of Endicot once more saw moving about amongst them the stately figure of her who had been Geraldine Hawthorne. She found it hard thus to find herself amongst the tangled threads of her old life, laden with all the bitter experience that had come to her with the new. But she strove to bear it, to be thankful for the salvage she had insured, to keep ever in mind that everything had not gone down in the wreck of her youth, that husband and child yet remained. For John Hammond had been true to his trust, and the child, its blond head safely sheltered under the white flag, had passed through friends and foes safe to her arms. But despite this, it cost her brave heart somewhat to wander forth, knowing her story, with its shame and sorrow, was known to every one she met; feeling that every eye turned upon her, expressed horror, reproach, or pity; this, where her girlish feet had trod, her girlish untried heart had first learnt the beat of love. And yet, through all the pain and shame, there was ever the sweet remembrance that she was at home; that, go abroad where she would, they were home faces she would see; that, pain her

as they might in their rough attempts at pity, the wish to comfort and soothe was there,—that the cruel stabs that hurt her so, were not given with intent to wound.

Gradually it became a recognised fact that Mistress Calverley was happier left alone; that her sore heart could not bear as yet the faintest attempts at condolence; that they must wait before the pity for her, and abuse of him, with which their hearts were overflowing, might find a vent. So, unheeded, unspoken to, Geraldine Calverley wandered about from place to place, tracking out with faltering feet the spot where the first chapter of her story had been written; the orchard where the apple-trees showed brown and bare, under whose white-crowned heads she had listened to the story of a man's love; across the narrow dividing road, to the sloping garden opposite, where tall hollyhocks reared their heads in flaunting autumn glory,—and there was but little to tell of the sweet spring-day when a girl with a scarlet hood about her head had gone down between the grey spikes of lavender to meet her future. Madam, at her spinning-wheel, seeing the tall black figure approaching, would turn away, with a glitter of something like tears in the eyes that used to be so sharp, and would go forth to meet her, and with gentlest tact slip her hand into the strong white one, with a little welcoming clasp; for Madam's quick voice and sharp words were all things of the past. Love had taught her so much that she, whom perhaps in her secret heart Geraldine had most dreaded to meet, had been the only one who had never probed her heart-wound—the only one whose tender unspoken sympathy

never jarred upon her. And when she looked at Madam's head, whitened sooner than it should have been, and recognised the power of the sorrow that had softened those quick black eyes, and left her hair so white, she would throw her arms about her mother's neck and weep passionately,—tears that softened and eased her, and left no sting, as other tears had often done. Even Pen's bright face, that in her dreary exile she had often longed to see, pained her. It filled her with bitter unreasoning jealousy, when one day, stealing into the Farm, she caught a glimpse, through a half-open door, of Pen, with her proud matronly air, talking to Madam, with the quick eager tones of old, her husband standing by her side, gazing, with all his honest proud soul in his eyes, at the two fine little lads that stood by Madam's knee. Quickly and silently Geraldine shrank away, putting her finger on her lips to stay the question written on the child's face, and stole down the passage that led to what had been old Mr. Hawthorne's sitting-room. Once there, with the door closed behind her, she felt safe, and wandered about from one thing to another, looking at the past with the eyes of the present. Everything seemed exactly as she had left it. She drew a chair up to the window and set the child upon it, bidding her remain quiet; and the quaint little old-fashioned May, who in her short stormy life had only learnt to be silent and to obey, remained where she had placed her, whilst she crossed the room to the oaken press, opened it, and looked in. Yes, there, exactly where she had placed it, lay the portfolio. She took it down, opened it, and, as she had done once before, looked at those sad unfinished tokens of the incomplete life

she had known. And as she looked, great tears rose to her eyes, and suddenly she fell down on her knees by the table, her hands folded above the book, whilst great sobs broke from her.

"Ah, the pity of it!" she cried, "the pity of it!" seeing as in a flame of light the poor weak man, who had out of his weakness failed in his allotted task, and the strong man who had abandoned his post. She sobbed on, forgetful of time and place, forgetful of everything but the dreary past, till she felt two small hands, essaying with all their tiny strength to draw hers away from before her face; heard a small voice say, "Mother," and then, as she did not reply immediately, in tones of gentle reproach, "Mother, *I* am here." And all unconsciously it seemed an answer to her sorrow. She flung her arms about the child, and kissed its soft cheeks and sweet lips, which had the soft little curve that had once given its sad distinctive mark to Geraldine Hawthorne, and looked with passionate love into the dark eyes, which were those of Ralph Calverley. "Yes; did I forget it?" she said more quietly. "I must never forget it; never forget that I have you, my little hawthorn blossom,—you—and him!" The bright October sun had set, it had grown dark and cold, when, with the child's hand held tight in hers, she made her way silently out of the Farm, back to Judge Sweetapple's. The avenue was dark and dreary, the gusts of wind making a miserable moan overhead, just as when little May's father, himself a young ignorant child, had gone up it, hand in hand with his mother, when these two passed under its shelter.

And as the way grew darker, and the wind moaned

louder, "Mother," said the little one, "carry me, I am growing frightened." Then Geraldine stooped and lifted the slight figure, and with its arms tight about her neck, its head on her shoulder, passed swiftly up the avenue, and in to the old house, and up the shallow oaken stairs, to the rooms which had been allotted to Ralph Calverley. She hesitated a moment at the door, but then, without putting down the child, as had been her first intention, entered. Lights were lit on the table, but the occupant of the room was not doing anything, only pacing up and down in that way which had once been his fashion when thought was required of him. How old, and worn, and ill he still looked, Geraldine thought, with a pang, as she first caught sight of him.

"What is it?" he inquired, catching her questioning glance.

"You are wearied, I fear," she said softly, moving to his side.

"No;" and then a little bitterly, "my life is not likely to weary me." But immediately, as if repenting of the tone or meaning of his words, stretched out his left arm—the right was still in a sling—and drew her nearer to him. "Perhaps I have missed you. I think that is what is the matter. Is she asleep?" as the small head was not lifted from its resting-place.

"No," she replied, moving into the circle of fire-light, "she is only kissing her mother," with firm tender hands unclasping the arms about her neck.

"You have been crying?" Ralph asked, a little nervously, as the bright fire-beams showed the marks of tears still about her eyes. She turned away her face from his, and busied herself taking off the little

one's boots and stockings, and warming its cold feet at the fire. "What troubles you?" he went on, standing close beside her, and striving to turn her face towards him.

"I think it is pity," she said unsteadily, and he could see that the hands that held the baby's small feet trembled. Without a word he turned away, a scarlet flame for a moment burning up into his hollow cheeks, and then as quickly fading away. He walked out of the circle of firelight to the narrow, unshuttered window, and stood gazing out on to the avenue, whose bare branches were tossing in the autumn wind. For a moment she followed his movements, her whole soul in her eyes, then she lifted weary little May on to the floor, and crossed the room to his side. Laying her hand on his arm, "Ralph," she began softly, "did I hurt you? Sometimes you are so unapproachable, so far off," stretching out her hands unconsciously, "that even *I*," with a little stress on the word, "seem unable to reach you! Does it wound you even to know that *I* pity you? You could always stand alone,—can you," her voice sinking to a whisper, "can you indeed fall alone?" It was the very first time, since the morning he had gone forth on his last expedition, that she had ever put any thought of her heart on the subject into words; and when she had spoken she remained still, her very heart feeling numb and cold, her eyes straining through the darkness to see if there was an answering expression in the dark eyes above her, but they were still averted. "Ralph, speak to me," resting her head against his arm, two bright tears falling on to his coat-sleeve.

He did not make any reply, but the arm against

which she leant was thrown round her, and she could hear the loud passionate beating of his heart as she stood thus.

"Dinie!" at last he said,—and was there a suspicion of trembling in those usually steady tones?—"Dinie, it is just that, just that, I *cannot* bear!"

"What?" she whispered breathlessly, not daring to raise her head from its resting-place, so sure was she that the pain in his voice must find its reflection in his face.

"That I *cannot* fall alone."

"Oh, Ralph," she sobbed, "do not hurt me with my own cruel words!"

"No," he went on unheeding, in that same half-stifled voice, "I have said nothing, I *can* say nothing, so they all think me hardened and unfeeling. But you," tightening his hold about her, "you must not misjudge me. If there was anything in the wide, wide world I could do to undo the past—or to give you back your youth—anything"—his voice rising in such passionate earnestness that Geraldine unconsciously shrank away from him—"anything, however hard, to be won by the path of life, or through the gates of death, you would not find Ralph Calverley shrink from it! Do you believe me?" drawing her nearer, and stooping his head, till his dark miserable eyes could gaze into hers.

"Ah, Ralph!" she cried, "I have never doubted you, or your love," lifting a caressing hand to the smooth, dark head, "nor," in a lower voice, "your courage. And because of one defeat, surely," pleadingly, "you need not despair of future victories."

"Yes, defeat," turning away, and resting his arm against the window, "but not desertion."

She shivered, and shrank away at the word that she never could accustom herself to hear without a sharp pain, like a stab, at her heart.

He noticed the movement, though he was not looking at her,—heard the quick, painful sigh, and with a sudden movement of his strong left arm, drew her back till she stood once more in front of him. She shrank back into the window-seat against which he had placed her, a faint terrified expression in the eyes she raised to his. And for a second he seemed half ashamed of his violence.

"Did I hurt you?" he asked. "It makes me rough and awkward not being able to use my right arm." And then, changing his tone, "It maddens me to see you shrink away from me like that, just because the word is said that is written across both our hearts. I wonder," looking into her whitening face and dilating eyes, "if you guess what my thoughts are, as I pace these rooms from morning till night, or if you suppose I think at all? Well, I will tell you," lowering his voice, and fixing his dangerous, flashing eyes on hers. "Sometimes I question how many days it will take for my right arm to grow strong and well, because," speaking low and clearly, "one is a surer shot with one's right hand than with one's left."

"Hush, Ralph," she interposed, her eyes dilating with horror; "oh, in mercy——"

But still holding her hands in his, so that she could not move, he went on ruthlessly. "Sometimes, when I am calmer—when I recall how you once told me my life was of value in your eyes,—sometimes,

when you are sleeping calmly, then I picture to myself a day, not so far hence, when you will awake one morning to find I have passed out of your life. Not by death," in answer to the terror-stricken eyes. "No; if you should ever so miss me, you need not fear that. No; your freedom will be less hardly won,—you need not fear to enjoy it."

All the terror had faded out of her eyes now,—white and lovely she faced him, a sort of defiant pain in her face.

"And is that all you have learnt from my life, Ralph?" she said slowly. "That I, your wife, would rejoice in freedom so gained; that to cut myself adrift from the past, is all I crave for? As if one ever could," bitterly,—“it would only mean leaving me to face it alone. And if you do not care for me,” her tones softening, her two hands clasped together, as in pain, “if you do not indeed, do you not think of the child,—our little hawthorn blossom?”—creeping closer to him; “what am I to tell her in the future when she grows up, and asks for you?”

“Tell her, if you will, that I was a coward, who could not face the consequences of my own crimes, and so fled, in the vain hope of forgetting them.”

“Oh, Ralph,” she said sadly, “I would rather that she knew the crimes, and learnt to see you facing the consequences! Let her,” her voice trembling, “only learn your past through your future. Let *us*, dear, dear Ralph,” stooping to lean her cheek against his hand, and speaking very low and earnestly—“let *us* learn to measure the sin, only by the repentance.”

He did not answer her in words, only he drew her fair head against his breast, and kissed her many,

many times; but Geraldine felt, as she crept away with little May in her arms, that she had conquered,—that she need not fear that empty, desolate future without him, with which for the moment he had terrified her.

The child hushed to sleep, Geraldine went softly down-stairs to the low-ceiled sitting-room where she was nearly always certain to find Cousin Miriam knitting, and Cousin Jonathan reading his paper, just as she remembered them in bygone days,—the room no persuasions would induce Ralph Calverley to enter.

At the opening of the door, Cousin Miriam held out a welcoming hand, and Geraldine sought the low stool at her feet. There was no one else there: Cousin Jonathan had not as yet apparently come in. For a little while Geraldine did not speak; she was upset by the scene she had just gone through, and the mere rest of leaning her head against Cousin Miriam's knee, and listening to the click of her needles, with closed eyes, was all she needed. And Cousin Miriam let her be. None, excepting perhaps it were Madam, realised so keenly what these years had done to the girl she loved,—realised so keenly how no words were soft or pitiful enough wherewith to bind up the bleeding wounds. So she said nothing, but presently laid down her knitting, and stroked back the bright hair from the hot brow, noting as she did so how flushed the cheeks were, how tear-stained the eyes.

At length: "Oh, dear Cousin Miriam," she said, opening her eyes, and turning them towards the soft, withered face above her, "how terrible it is!"

"Poor Geraldine!" tenderly stroking the raised head. "But it must be so; sin makes such big ripples that many must be affected by it. It is a sad necessity that they who sin alone, cannot suffer alone."

"No, I feel it. To-night," clasping her hands together, "my heart has had another stab."

"Poor heart!" Miriam sighed softly.

"Do you know," kneeling and taking Miriam's thin hands in hers, "that he has thought of leaving me? Oh, Cousin Miriam!" a gasp in her voice, "do you think that he would be so cruel?"

"No, dear child," answered the elder woman softly. "If he has told thee above all, it shows that the temptation is past."

"But that it should be a temptation!" she cried.

"You must deal gently with him, Geraldine; his soul is sick, and that will render the best of us fretful."

"Yes, Cousin Miriam, I strive, heaven knows, to be patient. Perchance I love too much, to be either wise or just. But if such thoughts are in his mind—have been in his mind," she corrected—"it means but one thing. After this," a faint blush rising to her cheeks,—*"by-and-by, we must go."*

"Go!" repeated Miriam Sweetapple.

"Yes; yonder, make some other home, where he is not known. Anything," with a shudder, "rather than hear him say what he said this day."

"Perchance thou art right, Geraldine." But Miriam sighed as she spoke. "Yes," more decidedly, "thou art right; it is not of ourselves we must think, but of him,—what will make it easier for him. We will

think, and by-and-by, when better days come, we will act. In the meantime," kissing her, "there is nothing to remember but 'Courage and Patience.'"

"Courage and Patience!" They seemed to have been the watchwords of her life.

After that, their talk drifted away to the boy Phil Honeywood, as Miriam Sweetapple still called him, —scarcely recognising in Geraldine's description of General Honeywood the young, buoyant man, whose memory was still warm with her. But her first affection for him had never waned. She loved to hear of him, and Geraldine was always willing, though in hushed tones, to tell of him, and his goodness to her. It pleased her, in a sad sort of way, to hear and talk of those who had been shut out of her life so long. And she sat on the low stool where *he* had sat at Cousin Miriam's feet, till it grew late,—time for her to go back to Ralph's side, for fear he should have missed her.

She kissed gentle Miriam, and moved softly away through the low oaken door, by which, she remembered, as she was passing out, Ralph Calverley had entered into her life. With vivid distinctness the scene rose up before her, and unconsciously she paused. The bevy of industrious girls in the long, low room,—Phil Honeywood's boyish figure, and bright smile, passing with ready ease from one to another,—and in the doorway, the tall squarely built man, in the plain dark uniform, his riding-cloak about his shoulders, his proud head lifted, his dark steady gaze meeting the raised grey eyes of Geraldine Hawthorne.

"Was I indeed that girl?" she thought, with a

sigh. "I, with my tired heart, and anxious, burdened life—could I ever have been that girl?" And so passed away from the glow and warmth, up the dark shallow stairs, to the waiting, expectant figure overhead.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOVE IS KIN TO DUTY.

“It is in vain
I throw into Oblivion’s sea the sword
That pierces me; for, like Excalibur,
With gemmed and flashing hilt, it will not sink.
There rises from below a hand that grasps it,
And waves it in the air; and wailing voices
Are heard along the shore.”

It is Sunday morning,—a hot Sunday morning in July,—and to every one in Endicot the peace and beauty of the day seems in tuneful accord with the joyful weeks that have preceded it; for the long strife of years is virtually over, and the liberators of their country are free to sheathe their swords, and to contemplate the great work accomplished. And from no heart does this consummation lift a greater weight than from that of Geraldine Calverley. For word has come to her husband, that if he so will it, he is at length free to seek another home. To know that this terrible penance is over,—that all the hours, and days and weeks that have gone to make up these few months, are past,—that she and hers are free to seek a new life in some spot where their story is not known to every passer-by—thrills her heart with fresh life. Once far away from here, she ever by his side to cheer and strengthen by the power of her love,—little May to give him an object in the future for which to

work, then—ah, surely then—she may safely hush to sleep that terrible dread that often makes her wake, cold and sick with fear, at the possibility of finding that he has gone out of her life,—beyond the reach of her caressing hands and loving words. So it was with a thankful heart she rose that Sabbath morning, and for the first time for many a long day put on a white gown, in honour of the peace abroad, and the shadow of it at home.

“Cousin Miriam,” she said, a little later, entering the cool, lavender-scented sitting-room, where the gentle old lady was awaiting Jonathan Sweetapple to lead her to the meeting-house—where the bells were already clashing out a noisy, unmusical announcement that the hour for prayer was approaching—“Cousin Miriam,” flushing a little—with a certain appeal in her voice—“you and Cousin Jonathan will walk on, will you not?” and then, as Miriam’s eyes were turned questioningly upon her—“*He*,” a little stress on the word, “is going to take me.”

Miriam rose then, and kissed the tender, gentle face. “Jonathan must be ready,” was all she said, however. “I will go and seek him.” And then, “I like to think of you to day as *together*,” and so passed away in her soft grey dress to join her husband.

The little congregation of Endicot were all in their places when the door was opened to admit some fresh comers, and many curious eyes were raised, and followed with some interest the figures now entering. To the sight of Geraldine Calverley they had grown accustomed, but even she, in her white dress, and with that delicate flush still on her cheeks, seemed to have

altered, and regained in some faint measure a portion of her lost youth, which made her unlike the Geraldine Calverley they had learnt to know; but none of those there assembled had as yet seen her husband since those far-away days when he came amongst them, to persuade their fathers and brothers to follow him to the war.

He seemed unconscious of the curious looks that followed him, noting his every movement, but seated himself by Geraldine's side; and quiet and calm as usual, sat through the whole service, never once glancing to right or left. The instant the last words of prayer and praise had died away he rose to his feet, and Geraldine observing him, did the same, and for a few seconds every one paused watching him.

Surely, remembering the Ralph Calverley who had once before stood amongst them here, the proud, masterful man they must all remember, and looking at this shadow of his former self who now faced them, every other feeling must have been swallowed up in pity. But no, it was not pity that was the predominant expression turned upon him, and he must have felt it; as amongst those gathered in the porch to exchange congratulations on the safety of such a brother, such a son—to whisper of the peace that was coming, the new hopes that their country was rejoicing in—he alone remained alone. No outstretched hand met his,—every eye was averted as he drew nigh. There was an almost unconscious shrinking back from even a chance contact with him, that told the story of contempt and horror in which his crime was held clearly enough, without any need of words.

Coming out into the blinding summer sunshine

after the shade of the chapel, he paused a moment, as if in doubt. Geraldine had been stopped by Pen's eager hand in hers, by Pen's triumphant voice and happy face: "Di, listen one minute; he will be home this week." And Geraldine's heart, filled with its own tender shadow of peace, had bid her stop and share in Pen's joy, and listen to her eager, happy hopes for the future. So Ralph Calverley, where once before he had been the pride and admiration of all beholders, stood now alone,—the little path that led to the chapel separating him from the gossiping, joyful neighbours, who were greeting each other with such warmth and happiness opposite,—almost unconsciously letting the narrow path lie empty between them and him, for whom was no possibility of sympathy or pity.

With folded arms he waited, the red staining his dark cheek, and even as he paused thus, a tall white figure stood by his side, a tender hand was placed in his.

"Come, Ralph," she said gently, "I am ready." And through the little crowd, who fell apart to make way for them, they passed.

Her head was lifted, her clear grey eyes shining with a steady light, a shadow of the red that still flushed his cheek showed in hers, as with her hand in his they walked away thus, every eye watching them in silence, till a few steps had taken them out of hearing.

"He looks awful ill," then remarked one voice. "Guess she'll be rid of him before long."

"That don't need to break her heart neither," replied another, feelingly.

"Hope she may have better luck next time, for she

deserves it. Too proud, but a good sort is Geraldine Calverley."

Only Pen Sumner, with flashing eyes and angry scornful tones, stamping her little foot, declared that they were all mean and cruel to hit a man when he was so down that it was taken out of his power to do anything but put up with whatever they chose to say or do. "And just after hearing the Bible read," stammering in her ready sympathy, "and when there is to be peace, and when Josiah is coming home. Oh, shame upon you!" And before any one could guess her intention she had fled past them all; and a few minutes later the lonely couple, pursuing their onward way in silence, were startled by the sound of quick footsteps, and Pen's small dainty figure, her face flushed with the pace at which she had come, stood beside them.

"What is it, Pen?" Geraldine asked gently, as she paused, and did not speak.

"I ran after you," said Pen, still panting a little, and raising her flashing black eyes to Colonel Calverley's,—eyes that grew suddenly dim when they saw the worn face above her, and the dark grizzled head,—"I ran after you because I did not see you after meeting, to"—pausing a second—"shake hands with you," holding out a small, shaking hand as she spoke.

"Thank you, Mistress Sumner," he said gravely, taking her tiny fingers in his strong clasp. "The world is kinder than I thought; I did not think there was one woman who would have done so much for me this day." He stopped a moment, but without unclasping her hand. "I do not think," he then went on

in a lower tone, "that it would to-day hurt even a hand as honest as this one, to touch mine." Then breaking off somewhat abruptly, "Farewell, Mistress Sumner, I will never forget what you have done for me to-day." And he and his wife went on, under the green shadow of the leafy trees, and Pen, the tears still in her black eyes, hastened back to the little group she had so lately quitted.

"Well, Mistress Sumner," as she stood once more by the side of the neighbour who had hinted at the possible and much-to-be-hoped-for demise of Colonel Calverley, "I don't myself go with you in such things. I can't say as I see you had any call for to do it."

"He is Geraldine's husband," said Pen, passionately, "and how you can all overlook that, I cannot understand."

"That don't make him any better, so far as I can see. But then," he hastened to add, with irritating calmness, as he walked away,—“but then, I can't say as I much holds with traitors myself!"

So Pen was left with nothing more to do but to call to her two big boys, and walk indignantly off with them, feeling that when Josiah came home, he would understand. "For he was fond of him," she thought,—“he will understand." And then with sudden pity, "Ah, poor Di! how does she bear it? Ah, Madam!"—for Madam was pacing home by her side,—“how does she bear it?" No need for any name,—Madam's heart told her easily enough who it was Pen meant.

"I do not know, indeed," she replied, "except it is by the same help that she has borne so many other things; for she is a good woman, and does not think

of what she wishes, but of what is right. Sometimes, Pen, I wonder," clasping her thin hands, "at the injustice of things. Surely, if ever a woman deserved a better fate——"

"Perhaps, Granny"—since the boys came, Pen had chosen this tenderer name for Madam Hawthorne—"perhaps," a little timidly, "it is not so unjust as it appears. Perhaps he——"

"He!" Madam repeated, rather as if he were not deserving of much consideration. But Pen went undauntedly on.

"You know I never liked him,—did I? But still," reluctantly, "I think there must be some good in him, because Geraldine loves him so."

"I hope so; oh, I pray for it, Pen, for he is all she has left!"

"And May,—you forget her."

"No, no, Pen, you mistake; but dearly as Geraldine loves her, she would never fill a place in her heart that a husband had left empty."

There they separated,—Pen to go to her happy, cheerful home, with its noisy, merry children, and active joys and cares—the home to which she should now shortly welcome back her husband, in whose heart Pen still reigned supreme, as in the days when he went courting to the Farm,—and Madam back to the said Farm, where her lonely years were passed; but ere entering, she loitered in the garden, as she often did now, to note the pure white blossoms of the alien rose-tree,—the tree to which, in her active, busy, earlier life, she had often given a hasty sigh, remembering that first love of her husband's, of which it told the sad tale, but which now, in her softer age, she

watched and cared for tenderly, because it spoke to her of a life she loved,—a life that had changed and saddened,—because it bore a name that it alone now in all the wide world had a right to bear—the name of Geraldine Hawthorne.

And whilst they sought their homes, Geraldine Calverley and her husband went quietly onwards, still her hand in his, towards Jonathan Sweetapple's house. After the meeting with Pen, it was some time before Geraldine could find voice to say anything; it was not, indeed, till they stood in the avenue, under its sheltering trees, that she said, raising her sweet eyes to his, "I can never thank you enough, Ralph, for coming with me to-day. I know," her voice quivering, "what it must have cost you," tightening her hold on the hand she held.

"Yes," standing still for a moment; "but I told you once, you remember, that there was *nothing*," laying a little emphasis on the word, "that you could ask me to do, and ask in vain."

After that there was another silence, till they stood in the room that Ralph had occupied so long—then he spoke again: "Geraldine,"—he had walked over to the window, to the same spot where he had stood that night last autumn, and had told her of his despair and anguish—

"Yes."

"Perhaps," taking her hands, "I spoke presumptuously just now. But you," with a sad smile, "need not fear my pride, need you?" And as she drew closer to him, caressing his hand softly the while,—*"No,"* snatching his hand away from hers, and stretching

them forth with a sudden, passionate gesture,—“I am humbled—humbled to the very dust! I have sacrificed everything,—friendship, honour, everything,—and this is the end!”

“No, Ralph,” she spoke steadily, though her eyes were dim and misty at the anguish of his tones; “not the end. No,” drawing his arms about her, and laying her head upon his breast. “And when you say you have lost everything, you forget my love!”

“Forget it,” he repeated, kissing her tenderly, “Heaven itself would, in truth, forget me in such case. No, Dinie, dearest, sweetest, truest wife that ever man had, if you fear that, you may put by your fears. Great as my sin, great as my fall,—so great is my love!”

“I fear nothing then,” she whispered, her arms about his neck. “With your love I dread nothing; new faces, a new home,—it is all nothing to me, so that we are together.”

Far away in that new home, where no curious or condemning eyes followed Ralph Calverley’s tall figure, as he went to and fro to his daily work,—in that home where, with the love of husband and child to place a shield between her and other times, and help her, if possible, to forget the bitter past, Geraldine one day received a letter from England. When she saw it the colour flushed hotly into her cheeks, and she crept upstairs to her own room, and locked the door, before, with trembling fingers, she unfastened the little packet. The writing was frank and bold, if somewhat inelegant, and it did not need for her to glance at the signature, to know from whom it came. “Mistress Geraldine

Calverley," so it began, and then afterwards, as if the writer had suddenly changed his mind—

"DEAR MISTRESS CALVERLEY,—I was rejoiced to hear from you that you had received your little daughter safe back; it must have been a great joy to see her once more. She was not altogether pleased with those who took her,—would rather, I think, have stayed with me; but I gave her a doll, that the good woman at the inn procured for me, and with some little persuasion got her to go quietly, telling her often, it was to you she was going. She made me kiss her many, many times before we parted. 'Tis not often I have met such a dear little maid, and so vastly obedient.

"My own family is somewhat changed in all this time I have been away. My father is dead, and my mother rather broke down, poor woman, and will hear of nothing but that I shall leave the army, and settle down into a country squire, and look after my pigs and cows—which is disappointing to me, as you will guess, seeing how much I like a soldier's life. But perhaps it is, as she says, my duty, so I have promised to do what she asks. I have never forgot what a lady, whom I honour and esteem, more than any one I have met since I knew her, once told me, that she thought I would stick to my post, whatever it might be. So it seems I have now settled down here, which is but dull work, after the life I have known. Need I tell you how overjoyed I was to get that letter, in which I was told that you prospered on that troublous night on which I saw you last. I also attended to the other matter of which you told me at that same time, and

found, where you said I should, the sword, which I took, and thank you much for. 'Tis a handsome blade, but I like it best because it serves to remind me of you. Not that I need such reminder; but I never was good with a pen, so you will forgive my rough phrases, which come from the heart of your true and sincere friend,

“JOHN HAMMOND.

“*P.S.*—’Tis hung up over the mantel-board in the dining-room, where it shows monstrous well.”

So the sword “from friends” found a resting-place in an old English hall, where its keen blade told nothing to the fair English faces whose eyes rested on it. Only, as the years passed, and the boy John Hammond grew into a plain, kindly-faced man, it spoke to him through the commonplace safe present, of the most exciting night his life had ever known; and he would take it down and show it to little awestruck faces, and listen to small, careful voices spelling out the significant words—“fight for us” engraved thereon, the while he told the story of that night’s ride, and all that hung upon it, till the small listeners would grow breathless with excitement; then John Hammond, his tale told, would hang the sword up again in the twilight,—the sight of these stolid happy English faces recalling a tiny dark-eyed figure that he had once petted and consoled, before starting it off on a sad, lonely journey.

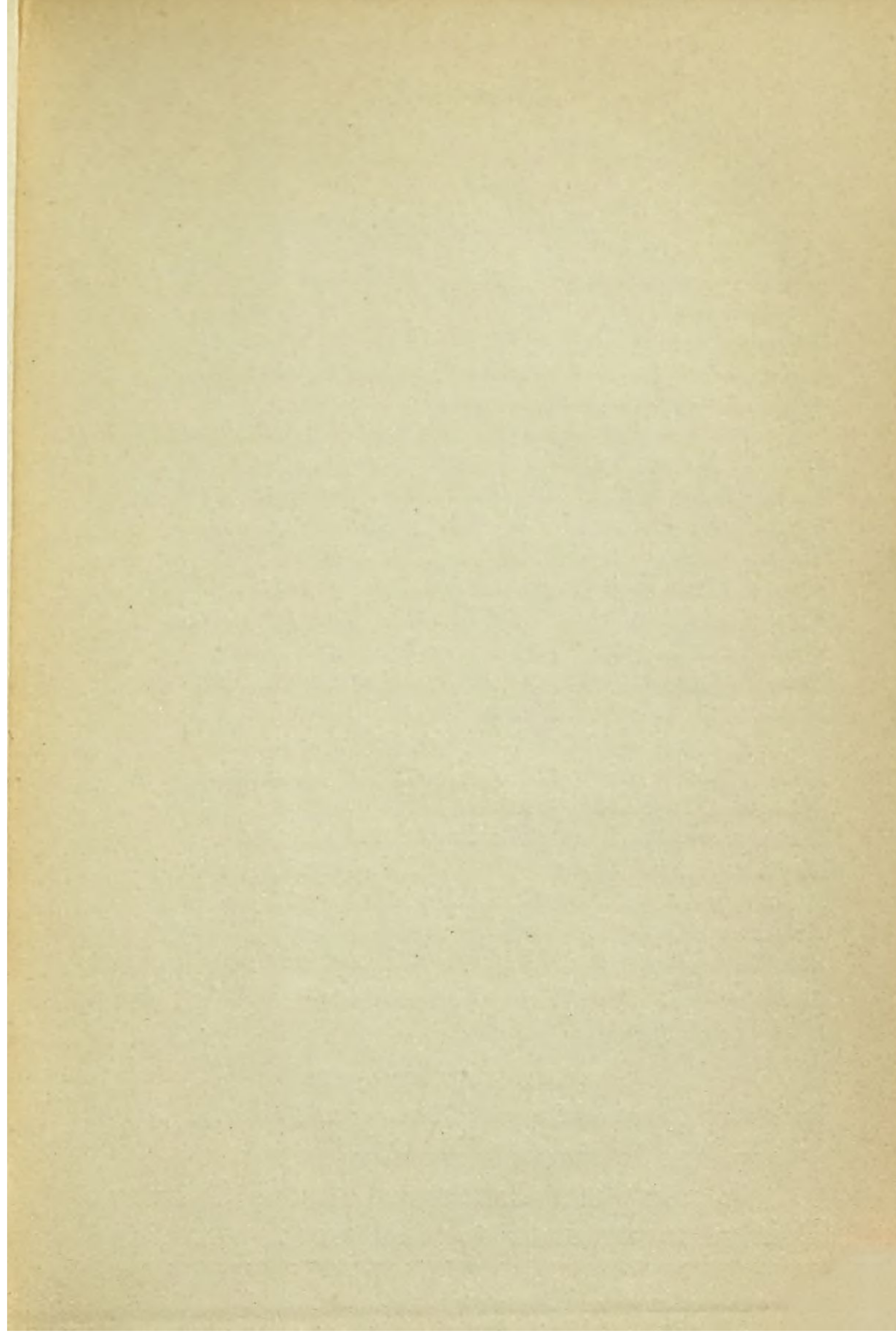
But the real history of the sword was buried, far across the dividing ocean, in the hearts of two men:

one of whom, crowned with every kind of honour and success, yet passed through life lonely and unsatisfied, because he could not forget the love of his youth, or the friend of his youth; the other, fallen from his high estate, friendless and alone, saving for *her* love, which had never failed him, but had been faithful alike through sin and sorrow,—sin and sorrow that had served to dull the bright hair, and shadow the serene grey eyes, but had never caused to waver the strong faithful love of her heart, since the day when he took her hand in his, and gave the name of wife to Geraldine Hawthorne.

THE END.



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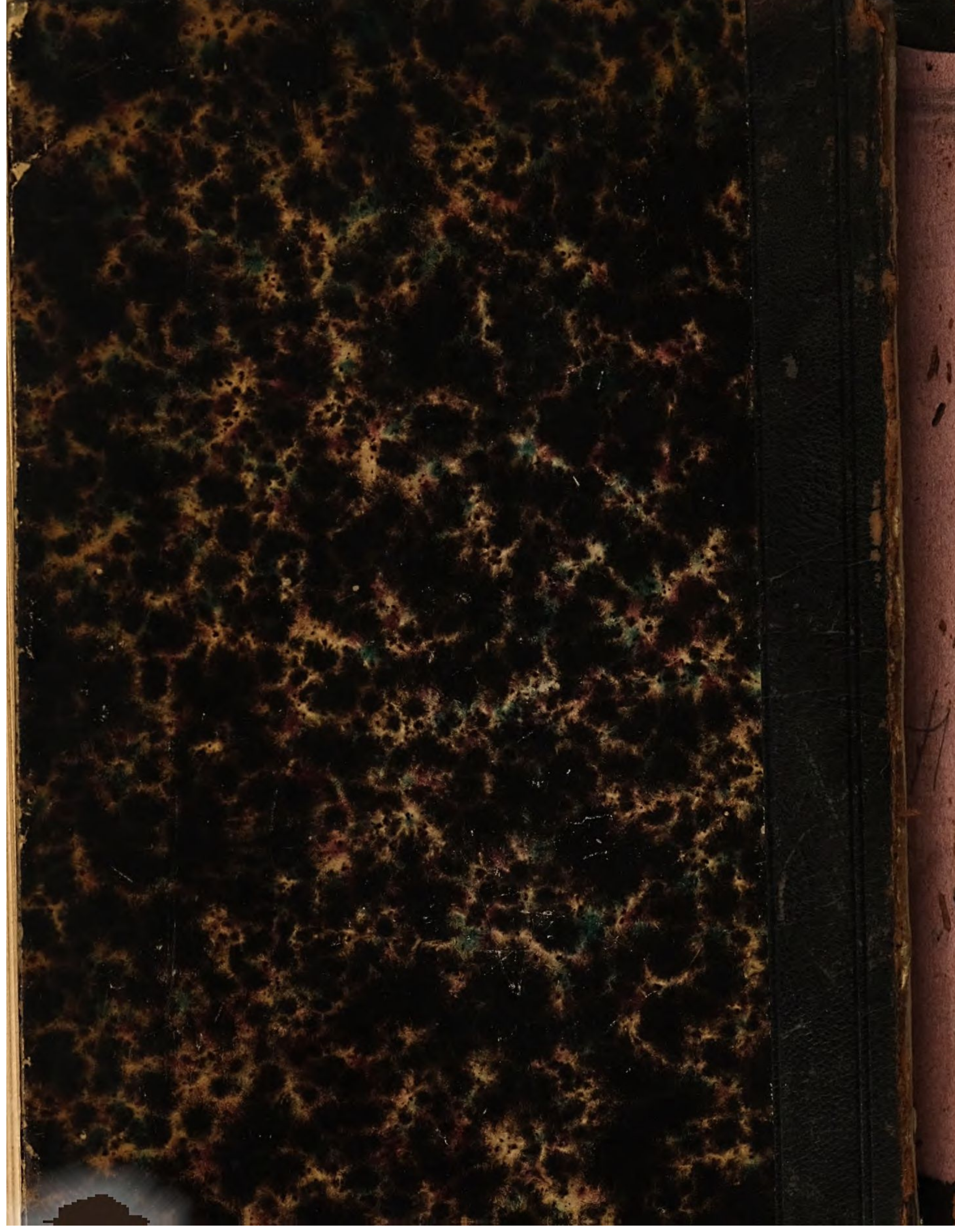
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P.o.angl. 151

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